

Library of the Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

Agnew Coll. on Baptism, No.

SCC
7985



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library



S E R M O N S.

★

LONDON:
BLACKBURN AND PARDON, PRINTERS,
HATTON GARDEN.

SERMONS.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM CLEAVER, M.A.,

RECTOR OF DELGANY, IRELAND.

*Including 2 plain Addresses on occasion
of the Adversities of Belgium.*

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us:
we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 Cor. v. 20.

ANY PROFITS WHICH MAY ARISE FROM THE SALE OF THESE SERMONS, WILL BE
APPLIED IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF THE CHURCH EDUCATION
SOCIETY FOR IRELAND.

LONDON:

T. D. THOMSON, 13, UPPER KING STREET,

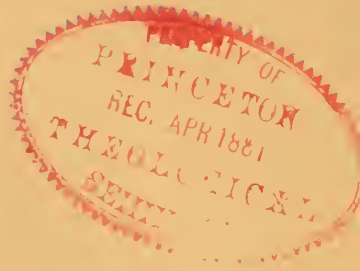
RUSSELL SQUARE;

JAMES NISBET & CO.; HATCHARD & SON; HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

DUBLIN: W. CURRY, JUN. & CO.

1847.





CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

HAPPINESS.

COLOSSIANS i. 19.

PAGE

“ It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell ” 1

SERMON II.

DELIVERANCE.

GENESIS xix. 12—17.

“ And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou any here besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” 19

SERMON III.

REPENTANCE.

ZECHARIAH xii. from the 10th verse to the end of the chapter, and the 1st verse of the 13th chapter.

“ And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as

one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." 39

SERMON IV.

JUSTIFICATION.

PSALM xxxii.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." 55

SERMON V.

CONFORMITY TO CHRIST.

1 JOHN iii. 2, 3.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 71

SERMON VI.

THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD.

LUKE xiii. 6—9.

“ He spake also this parable ; A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none : cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well : and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” 85

SERMON VII.

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxiii. 37, 38.

“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” 101

SERMON VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PROSPECT.

REVELATION vii. 9, 10, 13—17.

“ After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands : and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they ? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple ; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” 115

SERMON IX.

THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

ROMANS vi. 1—6.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” 133

SERMON X.

CHRISTIAN VICTORY.

ROMANS xii. 21.

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” 145

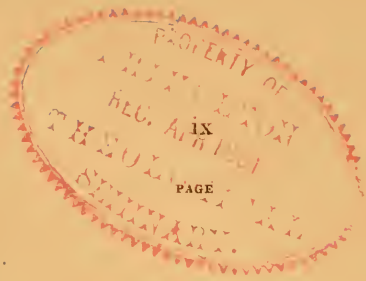
SERMON XI.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

1 JOHN i. 1—7.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 163

CONTENTS.



SERMON XII.

COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

PSALM cxxxiii.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” 179

SERMON XIII.

THE REFUGE.

ISAIAH xxv. 4.

“For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” 191

SERMON XIV.

THE EUNUCH OF ETHIOPIA.

Acts viii. 39.

“And he went on his way rejoicing.” 205

SERMON XV.

FESTUS, AGRIPPA, AND PAUL.

Acts xxvi. 24—29.

“And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” 221

SERMON XVI.

HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS.

1 SAMUEL ii. part of 25th verse.

“Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.” 231

SERMON XVII.

THE PROPITIATION FOR SIN.

ISAIAH liii. 5, 6.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” 245

THE CRUCIFIXION.

LUKE xxiii. 32—43.

“And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them! for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” . 261

SERMON XVIII.

THE RESURRECTION.

PHILIPPIANS iii. part of verse 10.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.” 269

SERMON XIX.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 CORINTHIANS xi. 23—32.

“For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; This do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” 283

TWO PLAIN ADDRESSES ON THE OCCASION OF THE
ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM.

ADDRESS I.

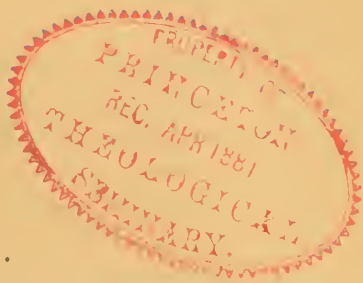
MARK x. 13—16.

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” 297

ADDRESS II.

DEUTERONOMY vi. 4—9.

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” . . . 310



SERMON I.

HAPPINESS.

COLOSSIANS i. 19.

“It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell.”

WE have in these words the explanation of what the Apostle had said just before. “Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,—we do not cease to pray for you,” he had said, “and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work;” that ye might be “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father.”^a

What encouraged the Apostle to pray for such great things for them? So apt are we to measure our expectations of what is attainable, by what we see ordinarily attained!—while we see those who profess faith in Christ Jesus, instead of being “filled with the knowledge of the will of God,” so ignorant of God; instead of being “fruitful in every good work,” so barren and *unfruitful* in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; instead of being “strengthened with all might,” as if they had *no* might

^a Colossians i. 4, 9—12.

or strength for the Christian conflict; so far from exercising "all patience," overcome by every *trial* of their patience; instead of "giving thanks" always to the Father, dissatisfied and discontented with what their heavenly Father appoints for them,—while we see so much of the *name and profession* of faith in Christ Jesus, with so little of the *power* of it, we are in danger of receiving an impression of Christianity itself, which has nothing in common with the Christianity of the Bible.

What was it, then, that encouraged the Apostle to pray for those to whom he wrote, that they might be "filled with the knowledge of the will of God," that they might be "fruitful in every good work," that they might be "strengthened with all might," that they might exercise "all patience," that, come what would, they might be always "giving thanks?"

It was because he knew what he here tells us, that "in Christ all fulness dwells," that there is in *Christ* a supply of all the grace for which he prayed. For he means, I need not say, that it is for *us* it is in him, not for himself; that it is, as he is the head of the body, the *church*, all this fulness dwells in him, for the supply of the wants of his church. It is, as he is presented to us in the first chapter of St. John's gospel, "full of grace," that "out of his fulness all *we* may *receive*."^b As the rain is in the clouds, not for the clouds themselves, but to water the earth,—as the light and heat are in the sun, not for the sun itself, but to warm and shine upon the earth,—as the mother is supplied with milk, not for herself, but for the nourishment of her child,—in like manner, all fulness is in Christ, that *we* may be supplied out of it.

For "it pleased the Father,"—"God so *loved* the world"^c—(for we are still to trace to this its *source*, as well for the

^b John i. 14. 16.

^c John iii. 16.

confirmation of our faith, as that we may be always giving thanks, the wonderful redemption which has been wrought for us)—“It *pleased* the Father,” says the Apostle; of his *own free grace*, that is; out of love unmoved but by *itself*, irrespectively of anything in *us* to recommend us to his favour,—when we had altogether *forfeited* his favour, when we had lost all, were *ourselves* lost,—it pleased him, in his infinite love, and in the riches of his grace, according to the good pleasure of his own blessed will, that in Christ there should be the recovery for us of all that we had lost, that while we have nothing in *ourselves*, we should in Christ possess all things. So that though we be, in ourselves, never so “wretched, and miserable, and blind, and poor, and naked,” as many as fly from themselves to Christ are in *him*, “rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” It is, as if a *beggar* might draw to what amount he would, upon the national bank. It is, as it was during the seven years’ famine in Egypt, when Joseph had such a supply of corn for the people: though they had nothing in their *own* stores, yet while they were supplied out of that which Joseph had provided for them, it was as if there had been *no* famine. In a word, while we have no resource whatsoever in ourselves, “in Christ” we are “complete,” says the Apostle.^d

Yet, who would think it, to look at those for whom there *is* this provision in Christ,—to see the body, for the wants of which there is such a supply in him, *languishing* as it does; as if, so far from appearing as “the fulness of him that filleth all in all,”^e the symbols of those seven years of famine, more truly represented its condition? Who would think that there was such a supply for us, when so little advantage is taken of it? Our fields are not long waving with their golden fruits before they become the scene of the

^d Col. ii. 10.

^e Eph. i. 23.

labours of the husbandman, and of the joy of harvest. Each morning, as the manna fell about the camp, they gathered, every one his portion, for their own use.^f Why is it, then, when there is all this supply and provision for us in Christ, so few seem to have the *benefit* of it, and that they who have, have not *more*, my brethren ?

Is it—it would seem, however, to be *some* explanation of it—that the greater part of those for whom the supply is designed, are seeking theirs from another source, as though the fulness were not in Christ, but in the world ?

And yet, would it not seem plain from these words themselves, that if *all* fulness be in Christ, there can be none *out* of him ; that there is nothing that can *satisfy*, out of Christ, that they are “ hewing out to themselves cisterns which can hold no water,”^g “ spending money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not,”^h who are seeking that satisfaction in the *world*, which is to be found only in Christ ?

And do we learn no lessons from the success which they have had, who have made the experiment ? It was not long after “ the younger son,” in the parable, had forsaken his father’s house, and “ taken his journey into the far country,” when “ he began to be *in want*.”ⁱ And is he a *solitary* instance of such want being experienced by those who have taken the same course ; and though they may not have been reduced to any such extremity as that to which *he* was reduced ?

Does the countenance, which, at the midnight entertainment, is lighted up, as with happiness, express always what is *felt* ? Is it the language of the *heart*, as well as of the countenance, that in the cup of pleasure there is no ingredient but pleasure ? Or, though it should be unmixed pleasure in the *first* draughts, is it equally so in the *last* ?

^f Exodus xvi. 21. ^g Jer. ii. 13. ^h Isa. lv. 2. ⁱ Luke xv. 14.

Is there to be conceived a much more melancholy spectacle than that of the wreck of one who had lived for this world, after having enjoyed, it may be, all its smiles and favours, who, though he may still have the air of fashion about him, and elegance of manners, and courtliness of address, and his conversation may retain much of what is agreeable and entertaining, yet has not God, it is too plain, and the eternity which he is approaching, in all his thoughts? While underneath the smiling exterior, how often would be found peevish and irritable tempers, the stings and bitter-nesses rankling which disappointment has left behind, and an aching, aching void!

A well-known Nobleman of the last century, who, if elevated station, wealth, success in life, literary accomplishments, brilliant society, could make a man happy, would have been among the happiest; one who, by the life he led, as well as by the character of his writings, seemed to say to this world, "Thou art my God:" yet, at the *close* of life, after his experience of what the world *was*, made some compensation, by some of his last sentiments and expressions, for the pernicious tendency of those contained in his writings. At a time when no little danger was to be apprehended for those entering life, from what one had written, who had attracted so much public attention, a Prelate of our church, the pious commentator upon the Psalms,^j in a sermon which he preached before the university of Oxford, thought to counteract the impression of his former publications, by contrasting with them these his later confessions. "He had run," said the man of the world, in the passage to which the Bishop referred, "he had run," he said, "all its silly rounds of business and of pleasure, and had done with them all:—that

^j Bishop Horne. The description of the external advantages for happiness, possessed by the unhappy Nobleman referred to, is in the Bishop's words.

while others saw only the gay outside, and were dazzled by the glare, *he* had been behind the scenes—had seen the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which move and exhibit the gaudy machinery—had seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience.” And what *resource* remained to him, when the curtain fell? No other, he said, but “to kill the time the best he could, now that it was become his enemy.” He “resolved to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey.”

No man ever knew the world better, or enjoyed more of its favours, than did that nobleman. Yet, in how truly abject a condition, when he most wanted its help and comfort, the world left him, and *he* resigned the world! Was there ever a more affecting and impressive sermon, than in the few sentences which have been now repeated, upon the emptiness of the world?

Or, let us go, if you will, to the very summit of it. Did history contain the records of what has passed in the *closets*, as well as of the public exploits and achievements of the kings and queens of it, how many *like* sermons might we not have heard preached, within the walls of palaces!

Ahab could find no contentment in his *kingdom*; all his courtiers could afford him no relief; but he loses his appetite, and takes to his bed, because Naboth will not let him have his vineyard for a kitchen garden!^k

Haman, though so distinguished a favourite in the court of Ahasuerus, yet, because a despised Jew will not bow to him, nor do him reverence, tastes no sweetness in the royal favour, nor in all the distinctions which had been conferred upon him!^l

Or, if we want more such sermons yet, let us hear that which has been left us by one who, perhaps, more than they

^k 1 Kings xxi. 1—4.

^l Esther iii. 5, and v. 11—13.

all, was qualified to preach it. If there ever was a man who made the experiment of what the world, in all its variety of resources, could do for us, it was Solomon. And what was the *result* of his experiment? We have it in the second chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes.—“I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also, I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me, also, silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were in Jerusalem before me: and whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. Therefore, I *hated life*; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”^m

Who then but will acknowledge,—as far as conviction and acknowledgment will avail, unless the god of this world has altogether blinded him,—that he who is seeking his *happiness* from it, (I was going to repeat,) is “spending money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which satisfieth not;” but would it not be yet *more* descriptive of him, to

^m Eccles. ii. 1—11, 17.

apply that other scriptural phrase, that he is “feeding upon ashes?”ⁿ

How long, then, will those in the humbler walks of life, persuade themselves that the want, of which they are conscious, arises from their condition and circumstances;—that could they change places with their superiors, were they rich, and great, and powerful, did they possess splendid mansions and large estates; could they, instead of toiling for their bread, make a holiday of life, and eat, and drink, and be merry, (for of how many is it not the dream?) the world would become a paradise to them!

Nay, and even though the world *had* in it what could satisfy us, yet for how long is it? What can be a portion for immortal man, must be everlasting as himself. But “the world *passeth away*, and the lust thereof.”^o

Ah! and by what, in the case of those who are *of* it, will it be *succeeded*? As we have had the testimony to what it *is*, of those who had the best opportunity of knowing it, let us now hear the testimony of one who could speak, from experience, of what is *beyond* it. For can we want any further light to be thrown upon the future state of those whose life was one of self-indulgence and worldliness, after that cry, at which, one might think, the cup would fall from the hand of the most confirmed sensualist,—the cry of him, the representative of those who had been of the world, in the state into which they have passed *out* of it,—“Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame!”^p

Are they mistaken, then, or, are they not—or rather should I not say, are they not under the most awful delusion imaginable—Is it not as though they thought to gather

ⁿ Isa. xliv. 20.

^o 1 John ii. 17.

^p Luke xvi. 24.

“grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles,”⁷ who are looking to this world for their happiness?

And yet, even after the delusion has been dissipated, we go on, as if we were still under it, till we have made the discovery of what *will* satisfy us, as well as that the world will *not*.

It is as if you saw a poor man, in never so tattered clothes, and which will scarce hang together about him, yet, tattered as they are, he will not, unless he be offered *better*, cast them off. Till he be given a new suit, he will cling to the old rags. And *we*, my brethren, go on still wrapping this world about us, for all the piercing cold it may let in through its tinsel and threadbare trappings, though we know that we are naked, till we know, also, what will *cover* our nakedness.

And yet, the acknowledged emptiness of the world might well dispose even those who have made no other discovery, to entertain the enquiry, however, whether there be *like* emptiness in what is offered them in the place of it. Especially when they hear how those have expressed themselves, who could speak from *experience* of what it is that is offered them. As when one says, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as dung, that I may win Christ.”⁸ Or, as when another, who, if rank and fortune had been his object, might have had what he *would* of them, and all the pleasures of a royal court, “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.”⁹

Is there not in the report of those who have *searched* the land, what might well encourage *others* to search it? For what explanation is there of such a renunciation of all that is most highly esteemed and eagerly sought in the world, but that for the sacrifices which they made, they had no

⁷ Matt. vii. 16.

⁸ Phil. iii. 7, 8.

⁹ Heb. xi. 26.

ordinary compensation? To have "forsaken all," as they did, for Christ; what must they not have *found* in Christ? And is he, then, so "despised and rejected of men," that they will not even *enquire* what there is in him for them?

What is it, then, we are to understand, my brethren, when it is said, that "in Christ all fulness dwells?" What is it we want? Pleasure is it? "In his presence is fulness of joy: at his right hand, pleasures for evermore."^t Or, is it greatness? And what of this has not *he* to confer, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords?^u To shine and to be distinguished is it men want? And shall they not shine as the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever,^v who become what Christ would make them? Or are *intellectual* riches the object? "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."^x Does one who has come to discover his real condition before God, want what will relieve his awakened conscience? "To Him, give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive forgiveness of sins."^y Is it peace—peace which shall not fluctuate with the fluctuations of other things, we want? Need that his promise be repeated? "Though in the world you should have tribulation, in *me* ye shall have peace."^z Are we in sorrow? And is not the office, if any, his own, to bind up the bleeding heart; to "wipe away all tears from our eyes?"^a Is the *love* of others precious to us? Of *what* love are not *those* the objects, for whom it is to hear, "As my Father loveth *me*, even so have I loved *you*?"^b Would we be unmoved, as the thought of what will succeed this present world presents itself to our own mind? In what state of mind is it not for those to look beyond the present, who, being at "peace with God through Jesus Christ, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!"^c Would we be renewed

^t Psa. xvi. 11.

^u Rev. xix. 16.

^v Dan. xii. 3.

^x Col. ii. 3.

^y Acts x. 43.

^z John xvi. 33.

^a Rev. vii. 17

^b John xv. 9.

^c Rom. v. 1, 2.

after the image in which we were created—renewed after the image of God? And was it not that we might become “partakers of the Divine nature,”^d the Son of God took our human nature upon him? In a word, if happiness there *be*—whatsoever constitutes it—“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise,”^e they are all as so many rays from this sun, as so many streams from this *the source and fountain* of all happiness.

“Happiness, thou lovely name!
Where’s thy seat, oh tell me where?
Learning, pleasure, wealth, and fame,
All cry out, It is not here.

Not the wisdom of the wise,
Not the grandeur of the great,
Can inform me where it lies,
Can the bliss I seek create.

Object of my sole desire,
Jesus, crucified for me!
All to happiness aspire,
Only to be *found* in *Thee*.”

And shall we not then *seek* it in him? or is it *encouragement* we want? Encouragement! Were we one hundredth part as desirous to be made happy *by* him, as he is to *make* us happy, nothing *else* should we seek. Yes, of *love* for us, of solicitude to see us enjoying all the benefit of what he suffered for us; of this, if of anything, there is the “fulness” in him.

Want encouragement! what! when we hear, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,”^f—for is it not of the waters which will quench that burning thirst, as no others can, the prophet is speaking? “*Every* one that thirsteth, come ye to them.” Let us have been taking never so large draughts of *others*, though we should have been “drinking in

^d 2 Pet. i. 4

^e Phil. iv. 8.

^f Isa. lv. 1.

iniquity like water;” “whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life *freely?*”^g Or, what is there not expressed in that his counsel to those whose lukewarmness was provoking him to spue them out of his mouth;—“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich:”^h that thou, who art so “wretched, and miserable, and blind, and poor, and naked,” mayest be rich. Nor let it be forgotten, that to buy of him who sells *here*, as it is indeed evident from the *condition* in which they are described to be, who are counselled to buy,—that it is to buy “without money.” For that the *price*, blessed be his name! he has paid *himself*. Or, if the use of such a term imply the *exchange* of one thing for another,—it is in exchange for our base metal, for the counterfeit coin which passes current in the world,—and though it may have long passed current with ourselves,—he offers us the true riches. Is it *encouragement* we want?

Am I then addressing any who would not deny that they have “forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to themselves cisterns,” and which they have not now to learn, “will hold no water?” But though *you* have forsaken the *fountain*, He, from whom the living waters flow, has *not* forsaken *you*. No, but as the well was so near to Hagar, while she knew it not,ⁱ there is in the wilderness in which *you* are, “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life”^j for you. And will you not, then—as the Prophet speaks, as he is exulting in the mercy which there was for those with whom God had been angry, but from whom his anger was turned away,—will you not, “with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation?”^k For alas! what will it avail us to have been *directed* to the well of life, and though it be so *near* to every one of us, if we will not *drink* of the living

^g Rev. xxii. 17.

^h Rev. iii. 18.

ⁱ Gen. xxi. 15—19.

^j John iv. 14.

^k Isa. xii. 3.

water? Let there be never so abundant a supply of milk for the infant, yet if it cannot be brought *to make use* of the nourishment which nature has provided for it, it will as surely perish, as if there had been none for it. And you know, from your own experience, that it is not in the *world* what you are seeking. Will you not, then, be persuaded to seek it, where you cannot fail of finding it?

But to those, also, who, in their *inexperience*, are looking at the world, it may be, as through a golden mist, through which it appears to them altogether another world from what it is,—to you, my *younger* brethren, I would address a few words. For if ever it might be expected that advantage would be taken of the experience of others, is it not after what we have now heard from those who had had experience of the *world*? Compare only those words of one of them, who, after having “run,” as he said, “all its silly rounds of business and of pleasure,” was taking leave of it, with the words of another who was taking leave of it, “The time of my departure is at hand: I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous judge, will give me in that day.”¹—Compare the candle of the one as it was going out, with that sun-setting of the other; and say, shall the world be your choice, or His service, who will enable you to pass through it, and to take leave of it, as did his blessed Apostle?

And yet, neither is it to satisfy you, though you should not seem to hesitate what choice to make—nor though religious duties should not be neglected by you. We are to be upon our guard against what is “of the world” in *religion* also. There are *religious* cisterns, as well as others, which hold no water. Such is the tendency of our earthly

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 6—8

nature to a worship more congenial to it than that of God, as a *Spirit*,—"in spirit and in truth;" there is still such a disposition in us to make to ourselves a *visible* god, in the place of Him who is *invisible*, that there is a danger always, lest, for the *spiritual* Christianity which draws out of the fulness which is in Christ for us, another, consisting of *externals*, should be substituted,—lest a disproportionate importance, however, should be attached to the external part. We are to be upon our guard, lest in *religion*, also, we be rather occupied with what addresses itself to the *senses*, than with what is the object of *faith*,—nay, lest its *externals*, instead of drawing the mind *to* the Saviour, draw it *from* him; lest in the place of the habitual dependence upon the teaching of the Spirit, we transfer to the subordinate teaching,—as forgetting that we are to call no man father or master upon earth—the submission of mind which is due only to the Divine—in a word, lest we bring ourselves into the position of those of whom the Apostle speaks, as "not holding the Head," at the same time that they professed their entire subjection to him, because they were "subject to ordinances."^m

Not that I mean—for these are times in which, upon such a subject, we may be liable to be misunderstood: the *last* thing that I would be understood to intend, would be to speak in *disparagement* of ordinances, or as though we could too constantly, or too reverently attend upon them. It is through the *outer* court of *ordinances* we enter "within the veil." The nature of Christianity, adapted as it is to our compound being, has been no less mistaken by those who have depreciated its external institutions, than by those who have attached an undue value to them. If "*circumcision* availeth nothing" in itself, neither does "*uncircumcision*."ⁿ As zeal for ordinances, on the one hand, may be

^m Col. ii. 19, 20.

ⁿ Gal. v. 6.

put in the place of the *object* of ordinances, so may zeal *against* them, on the other. What it concerns us to impress upon ourselves is this, that it is only as we are in communication with the *Head himself*,—not independently, to be sure, of the instituted *channels* of communication, but that it is only so far as through such channels we be conducted to, and are in *communion* with the Divine Head himself,—the fulness that is in him is made available to us. Let us imagine the time of our own departure to be at hand. Alas for us, if, in such an hour, instead of drawing out of the fulness of peace and hope which there is in Christ for us, we should have no comfort beyond what the external forms and “beggarly elements” supply! Nay, the sacrament of the Lord’s supper itself, unless at the same time that we partake of the outward symbols, we also spiritually “eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood;” the blessed sacrament of the Lord’s supper itself becomes a beggarly element.

But let me delay no longer to turn to those of whose faith in Christ Jesus there are evidences, such as the Apostle heard of among the Colossians. The Apostle did not content himself with giving thanks for the *present* attainments of the Christians of Colosse; but what *further* did he not desire for them?—no less than that they might be filled—“that they might be *filled with all the fulness of God*,” was it not?

Christians are too often like those rich men,—so rich and so *poor* at the same time,—who, while their chests are full of gold, are haunted with apparitions of impending poverty and ruin; while they have *reason* to be, as if they had— for have they not?—a treasury to draw upon which is not to be exhausted.

Let me, then, offer one or two remarks which the subject would seem to suggest for such as *you*, my brethren.

The first is this: That you are not to be contenting yourselves with *this* or *that* grace; with this or that *part* of

the fulness which is in Christ for you ; but to seek “ to come behind in *no* gift,”^o as the apostle speaks,—in *no* grace. We are to be “ receiving out of his fulness *grace for grace.*”^p As the print upon the paper corresponds, word for word, letter for letter, to the type in the press, no grace is there in Christ himself, of which he would not see the counterpart in those who are his. We are not to be content with receiving pardon and peace from him, for example, without receiving from him *also* the love, the bowels of mercies, the kindness, the humbleness of mind, the meekness, the patience, the forbearance, by which those who are his are to be distinguished. In such *measure* are we to be drawing out of the fulness which is in Christ for us, are we not ? as to “ add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity ;”^q to bring up, in the train of our *faith*, the whole sisterhood of Christian graces. The Apostle would not have us to be satisfied in the absence of any *one* ; no, nor with *mediocrity* in any one of them.—“ See that ye *abound* in this grace also.”^r

The other remark that I would make is, that it is not at particular times, only, we are to be drawing out of the fulness which there is in Christ for us, but at *all* times ;—not only, I mean, in the hours of *devotion*, but in those of business also, and of relaxation. And he would have us to make it to *appear* that it is so with us at all times,—that his grace is flowing into us, let us be engaged as we may, as well as in our more immediately religious engagements. He would have us to be “ as a spring of water, whose waters fail not ;”^s as the Prophet speaks,—rather than as such rivers as rise and fall with the tide ; high, it may be, at one time, as their banks, while they are not visible at another.

^o 1 Cor. i. 7.

^p John i. 16.

^q 2 Peter i. 5—7.

^r 2 Cor. viii. 7.

^s Isa. lviii. 11.

Oh Christians! if there be all this fulness in our Divine Head for us, what manner of persons ought we not then to be! We can now understand why he says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy:"^t for that his *own* holiness is all for *us*—is all in Christ for *us*. "What manner of persons ought we not then to be, in all holy conversation and godliness,"^u in all the lustre of the Christian character, how fruitful in every good work, in every grace, "walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,"^v truly!

And think what a reflection we cast—(for is it not a consideration to weigh with those, with whom to live to the glory of God has become the object of life?) think what a reflection and dishonour we cast upon the all-bounteous Giver of all grace, if it be not so with us—as though He were *not* thus rich towards all who call upon him—as if there were *not* such a supply of all grace in Christ for us! If the lost son, after his return home, instead of appearing in "the best robe," and with "a ring" upon his hand,^w had made a scarce better appearance than when he was feeding the swine, what a different impression from that which we now have, we should have received of the father! We are responsible for making it to appear and to be believed that there is that in our Divine Redeemer for us—that there is that in him for us, which can give us peace which the world cannot give, "satisfy us as with marrow and fatness,"^x which can render us independent of every thing but himself, which becomes a well-spring of joy and peace and righteousness in our own bosom. And what must it then be at the fountain-head—one and another may be led to reflect—what must not the blessedness in his own presence be, and the pleasures for evermore at his right hand!

And shall I run my soul out of breath in pursuit of what,

^t Lev. xix. 2.

^u 2 Pet. iii. 11.

^v Col. i. 10.

^w Luke xv. 22.

^x Psa. lxiii. 5.

let me be never so successful, one who well knew what he was saying, has pronounced to be "vanity and vexation of spirit:"^y vanity and vexation of spirit here, and what, hereafter, may make me feel the want of a drop of water to cool my tongue! Shall I spend and be spent in such a pursuit as this, when that "fulness of joy" may be mine, and "pleasures for evermore!"^z

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that in a deep sense of our own emptiness, and of the world's emptiness, we may be ever drawing out of Christ's fulness, and that we may so draw from our Divine Lord, that the same mind which was in *himself* may manifest itself in us, to thy praise and glory, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

^y Eccles. i. 14.

^z Psa. xvi. 11.

SERMON II.

DELIVERANCE.

GENESIS xix. 12—17.

“And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou any here besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place.

“For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.

“And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.

“And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

“And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him, and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

“And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”

THAT the appalling narrative of this chapter has an application beyond those of whose sin and doom it is the record, would be suggested, were it only by the selection of it, as one of the portions of Scripture to be read in our churches, upon the first Sunday of the present season of

humiliation.^a But are we not also referred to it in other portions of Scripture itself, as to one which is full of the most momentous instruction for us? “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth for an example,” says St. Jude, “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”^b “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, he condemned them with an overthrow,” says St. Peter, “making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.”^c Nor is it only to the judgment which was executed, we are referred, as an ensample of the judgment to come, but to the insensibility also which prevailed, to the blind and desperate security of Sodom and Gomorrah, as what no less characterises those upon whom *eternal* judgment is impending. “As it was in the days of Lot,” (do not we read?) “they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded,” were immersed in the occupations and pleasures of life, and without any alarm or apprehension, “till it rained down fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all; even so will it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed:”^d while in the deliverance of him “whose righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked,”^e *their* deliverance is represented, who have “come out and are separate” from a *world* lying in wickedness, and touch none of its “unclean things.”^f

In the part of the chapter which has been now read, we are presented with an instance of the insensibility and security of the devoted cities, as also with the circumstances of the preservation of righteous Lot. I would propose that we should consider the one and the other, my brethren, in connexion with this the application of both of them in the New Testament.

^a Lent.

^b Jude 7.

^c 2 Pet. ii. 6.

^d Luke xvii. 28—30.

^e 2 Pet. ii. 7.

^f 2 Cor. vi. 17.

Do we then read, that when Lot “went out and said unto his sons-in-law, Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city, he seemed as one that *mocked* unto his sons-in-law?” And when they who have a like gracious commission, call upon those who are in like danger, to arise and escape from it, to escape from impending destruction, are not *they* heard continually, as if the danger were unreal, and that no such destruction was impending? For that he who “worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience,”^g still persuades them, oh! and how successfully, “Ye shall not surely die.”^h You *may* walk after the flesh, you *may* forget God, you *may* seek first the world and its enjoyments, and you shall not die for it. So that where will you meet with a man, let him be living as he may, who does not yet hope to be saved?

Whence the wide-spread delusion? — for inasmuch as upon the withstanding these “wiles of the devil” our eternal salvation depends, it is no unimportant part of the office of those who have to “show men the way of salvation,” to detect and expose them—Whence is it, then, that men persuade themselves so universally, that though they allow themselves in sin, they shall not receive the wages of sin?

The deception which is practised upon them is various. Does conscience, as the brink is approached, take alarm? Does the young man, yet uncorrupted, hesitate? The hesitation and alarm are met by the suggestion, than which, in order to hush any such alarm, none is more frequent—by a misapplication and perversion of what in itself is most true—that God is *merciful*. And was not God merciful, when he rained down the fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Nay—is it not expressly stated, that there was then a signal exercise of his mercy—that “while Lot lingered, the angels laid hold upon his hand,

^g Eph. ii. 2.

^h Gen. iii. 4.

and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being *merciful* unto him?" Yet his mercy hindered not the opening the sluices of his wrath, and raining down the fire and brimstone upon all besides. And was not God merciful, when "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened?"ⁱ And do not we read, that then also his mercy signally interposed, and not only in the preservation of Noah, but that his long-suffering also towards others "waited long while the ark was a-preparing?"^k Yet his mercy hindered not, but that "all flesh died that moved upon the earth, that every living substance was destroyed from the face of the ground, that they were destroyed from the earth."^l In the day when mercy will ride in triumph, from the great white throne encircled with the *rainbow* the sentence will proceed, "Depart, ye cursed."^m Do not we read in one and the same clause, (in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus,) in the same clause in which the Lord proclaims himself "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin"—that he "will by no means clear the guilty!"ⁿ True. "The mercy of God is over all his works."^o "His mercy reacheth higher than the heavens."^p "His mercy endureth for ever."^q "He delighteth in mercy!"^r Or what would become of *any* of us? Yet no less surely will "the Lord Jesus be revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."^s

ⁱ Gen. vii. 11.^k 1 Pet. iii. 20.^l Gen. vii. 21, 23.^m Matt. xxv. 41.ⁿ Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.^o Psal. cxlv. 9.^p Psal. cviii. 4.^q Psal. cxxxvi. 1.^r Micah vii. 18.^s 2 Thess. i. 8.

Yet those upon whom such everlasting destruction is impending, who are rendering themselves objects of judgment without mercy, persuade themselves that there will be mercy for them without judgment!

Another ground of false peace is in the numbers that are travelling the same road. Alas! men are lulled into security by what ought to fill them with apprehension. For are not the numbers declared to be in "the broad way which leadeth to destruction?"^f To be of the many, so far from being a ground of security, affords cause for all alarm. It is no other than the confidence of those of Sodom. It is as when the remonstrance of Lot, as of "one fellow, who had come in to sojourn and would needs be a judge,"^g was resisted and resented, as the interference of one who presumed to dissent from all the rest—to oppose himself to the whole city. Men will not believe that they are in any such danger, while they see such numbers pursuing the same course with themselves. As if they had yet to learn, that at the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah, an entire population was consumed, as in a moment,—that the population of the whole earth, with a like single exception, had been swept from the face of it!

Another source of delusion is in the disguise which the popular misapplication of language puts upon sin; in the mask which it wears in the qualifying and extenuating names which are applied to it. A man, while he is breaking all the commandments of God, is a little gay only, or a little too wild, perhaps, but he will reform by-and-by; he has a good heart all the while; he is no one's enemy but his own. While, as God speaks and judges, the city which was called by his own name, when it became chargeable with "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, and that it strengthened not the hand of the poor and needy," was

^f Matt. vii. 13.

^g Gen. xix. 9.

designated by no other than that of "sister to Sodom"^v—the like habits are glossed over, in the vocabulary of society, as if there were little harm in them, and that no danger was to be apprehended from them.

And how many speak peace to themselves, and think that all is well, because they are decent and respectable in their outward character and conduct, and not inattentive to the prescribed offices and observances of religion! As if those, of whom He who knew what was in man, pronounced that it would be "more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them,"^w had not been outwardly decorous and outwardly religious!

Shall we not, then, as we would not be wanting to those who are satisfying themselves with false peace, in the place of the true—that such disguises and delusions may be yet more effectually exposed—inquire, what is the real condition of those who are the victims of them? Shall we not—while we hear, that "if a man bless himself in his heart, saying, that he shall have peace, though he walk in the imaginations of his heart, the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses written in this book shall lie upon him!"^x For since our nature became depraved at its source, what but a like depraved nature has descended universally,—so utterly depraved, that, as we read in the sixth chapter of the book of Genesis, "God saw the wickedness of man, that it was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of man's heart was only evil continually:"^y or, if such should be thought to be a description only of the ungodly world *before the flood*, let us refer to where we read in a subsequent chapter, that when Noah had but now come forth out of the ark, and before the new earth had yet been stained with sin, "God said

^v Ezek. xvi. 49.

^w Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

^x Mark vi. 11.

^y Gen. vi. 5.

in his heart, that he would not curse the ground any more for man's sake, for"—the reason which is assigned, why God would no more so curse the ground for man's sake is—that "every imagination of man's heart was evil from his youth;"^z that, such had become the inherent depravity of fallen man, but that God engaged himself by a solemn promise no more so to curse the ground for his sake, a perpetual succession of deluges would have been to be apprehended.

Such then has become our fallen nature, that, to say the very least of it, we are, in ourselves, incapable of pleasing God *in any thing*, and the holy God has pronounced, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in *every* thing that is written in the law of God to do it."^a We are one and all of us, then, in ourselves, under a more fearful curse are we, than that of which God forbears to make the earth any more the scene. The curse of God's violated law, even the sentence of eternal death, is suspended over every human being, as he is in himself. "The wrath of God abideth on him,"^b and before him there is no other prospect, but that of eternal wrath and fiery indignation.

Might we not then expect—would not a stranger, however, to our world, and who was a stranger to the delusion under which it is, expect to hear the one universal cry, "What shall I do to be saved?"^c But *is* this what he would hear? *Is* such the cry? Ah! but is it not rather, What shall I do to enjoy myself in the world? What shall I do to gather round me as much as I can grasp of its good things? What shall I do to protect myself from the evils and inconveniences to which I am subject, in my passage through it? Does it not sound like distraction? And what is it short of distraction? Is it not, as if a man were full of concern that his finger ached, while he had a mortal wound rankling in his breast which gave him no concern;

^z Gen. viii. 21. ^a Gal. iii. 10. ^b John iii. 36. ^c Acts xvi. 30.

or, as if one who had been condemned to lose his head, had no other care, but that it should lie easy upon the block? While the immortal soul is under condemnation, while the immortal soul is mortally, or rather *immortally* wounded, what relates to the enjoyment, the ease, the accommodation of the perishing body, is the one absorbing object of that immortal soul. Exact, awfully exact the parallel—"As it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, till it rained down fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all"^d—no otherwise is it with those over whom eternal judgment is impending!

But we were not to be occupied with the *dark* picture all the time. Blessed be God, never is it for us to be so! There is the brighter one before us to turn to, of those, who, while they are in the world, are not *of* it, and of all the solicitude which is expressed, in the passage, for our deliverance out of the world, and from the doom which is hanging over it. Let us, then,—for will it not awaken renewed thanksgivings on the part of those who *have* been delivered, as out of Sodom, and for the encouragement of such as *would* be delivered—let us now proceed, (as it was proposed, secondly,) to the Gospel application of the circumstances of the deliverance of Lot.

For it is not only, that while the Law pronounces "Cursed is every one who continueth not in every thing that is written in the law of God to do it,"^e the Gospel replies, that the Son of God "hath redeemed us from the curse, having been made himself a curse for us;"^f—it is not only, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,"^g but, even as when the angels hastened Lot, saying, "Arise, take thy wife and thy two

Luke xvii. 28, 29. ^e Gal. iii. 10. ^f Gal. iii. 13. ^g 2 Cor. v. 19.

daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city," we have the further commission, in like manner, fellow-sinner, to hasten thee, still to follow thee with assurances, with exhortations, with persuasions, with entreaties, "as though God did beseech you by us, to *pray* you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God."^h Does not our Divine Master speak of himself, as "daily rising up early, and sending his servants to you;"ⁱ as "stretching out his hands all the day long to you;"^j as "waiting to be gracious to you;"^k as still crying in your ears by us, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"^l

Nor does he yet stop here, in what he would do to save us. But as "while Lot lingered, the angels laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him," in like mercy the Lord lays his hand upon *us*, while we linger. For what else is it, when he sends sickness, for example, to be a damp upon the enjoyment of the things of sense, and to abate our inordinate affection for them; or brings us into situations of danger, in which the veil is removed from death and eternity; or disappoints our hopes, that we may lay hold upon a hope that will not disappoint us; or severs tender ties, makes a blank which himself alone can fill up; or, if affluence and the seductions of prosperity be the snare and the occasion of our lingering, makes us poor perhaps, that we may become rich: in one way or another, the Lord in mercy lays his hand upon us, while we linger, makes the dispensations of his providence to be subservient to the designs of his grace, in his wisdom adjusts our circumstances to our exigencies; he leaves no expedient unemployed, if so be, he may save us, if so be, he may snatch

^h 2 Cor. v. 20.

ⁱ Jer. vii. 25.

^j Rom. x. 21.

^k Isa. xxx. 18.

^l Ezek. xviii. 32, and xxxiii. 11

the sinner as a brand out of the burning, if so be, he may "compel us to come in!"

Nor is it only the interference of his *providence* that is represented by the angels laying their hand upon Lot, and upon his wife, and upon his daughters. There was also signified by it a yet mightier grasp, even of the hand of that Almighty Spirit, by the operation of whom, the message of his grace and the concurring messages of his providence are rendered effectual to those to whom they are sent.

And then, does he see any *escaping* from the snares of the devil, and of a world lying in wickedness? As "when the angels had brought Lot forth, and set him without the city, they said, Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed;" in like manner are *we* then admonished. That we should not look behind us, nor stay in all the plain, is an admonition which is no less addressed to those of ourselves who are escaping, than it was to Lot: an admonition, that we should fly from the haunts of *sin*, (and though they should not be acknowledged to be such, by those who resort to them;) that we should fly from all companionship with such as would seduce and tempt us into sin, from any familiarity with those who are lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God: an admonition it is, that we should not breathe the atmosphere of sin, that we should fly from the allurements, from the occasions of sin, that we should not stay where we are exposed to the contagion and contamination of sin—lest we be of those, as the Apostle so solemnly warns us, "who draw back unto perdition"^m—or, as in the warning language of another Apostle, "Lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness:"ⁿ "for if after having escaped from the pollutions that are in the world," as he continues, "through

^m Heb. x. 39.

ⁿ 2 Pet. iii. 17.

the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."^o Neither is it only that we should not "look behind us," that is the purport of such an admonition: there is the direction in it also for us, that our eye should be "toward the mark" which is *before* us; that the prize should be still kept in view, even "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."^p For otherwise, look behind us we shall. The fascination of worldly objects is not to be displaced but by the habitual contemplation of the heavenly ones. Till we come under the attraction and power of the world to come, we remain under that of the present evil world. And yet further. In the prohibition to look back, an admonition to advance is included. For what other security is there for us that we shall *not* look back,—ah! and *draw* back? For who remains stationary? And as surely as, while with the one eye of faith we look unto Jesus in his humiliation made a curse for us, we with the other see him coming in his glory, we cannot fail to advance. In a word, He who would "save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him,"^q would make us to hear a voice behind us to the last, saying, Onward! onward! when we are tempted to sit down, or to stand still, and to raise us heavenwards, when the soul cleaveth to the dust, and to keep us in holy fear of relapses and declensions.

Neither have we yet heard all that, in this passage, the Lord says to those, who, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, have escaped, themselves, from the pollutions that are in the world. "Hast thou any here besides?" said the angels to Lot: "son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place." What encouragement! and

^o 2 Pet. ii. 20.

^p Phil. iii 14.

^q Heb. vii. 25.

is it not encouragement which is perpetually given to the believer, that, according to his faith, he shall be instrumental in the salvation of others; and of those, in whose salvation, if in that of any, he would be desirous to be instrumental! Nor is it only that we are encouraged, but are we not also *commanded* to make such efforts for others? "Whatsoever thou hast in the city," Lot is commanded to bring out of it. What are we then to think of the want of solicitude for those who lie exposed to the judgment of which that of Sodom was set forth as an ensample? How is it to be explained, (and yet the explanation is sufficiently obvious) that, while in what relates to the body, if we be taken ill, or that some accident has befallen us, the whole circle of our acquaintance will be assiduous and solicitous in their inquiries for us, the mind diseased, the soul, though it be dead in trespasses and sin, and while the wrath of God abideth on it, it is no affair of theirs; it is regarded, as was he who fell among thieves, by the priest and Levite, and they "pass by on the other side."^r We are here reminded of what is expected of those in whom anything of the same mind has been formed which was in Christ Jesus, in the *spiritual* relation in which they stand to others. Even as it is for those, to whom has been committed the ministry of reconciliation, in their measure, to do the part of these angels—like them, to show men the way of salvation, and hasten them while they linger, and lay their hand upon them while they linger, and not to let them go till they fly for refuge to where they direct them, (Oh! and that we *may* in some measure resemble them, in such ministering to the heirs of salvation, and knowing no greater joy than over one sinner that repenteth!)—so is it not less for *you*, my Christian brethren, to do the part assigned to Lot, and, by admonishing those who are in danger, and showing them the

^r Luke x. 31, 32.

way of escape from it, and letting them see, in your own earnestness to escape, your deep apprehension of their danger, to be fellow-workers with us in rescuing them from it.

There are in this passage, several descriptions of persons suggested, to whom we are thus to address ourselves. First, those to whom we seem as if we mocked—those who are sealed up in an insensibility and security, which would seem to set every appeal to them at defiance. And yet, while we hear, “Is not my word as a hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces?”^s—while the promise is sounding in our ears, “I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh,”^t are even such to cease to be objects of solicitude with us, and of hope? Oh! to whom may we not address ourselves with hope, when it is with “the ministry of reconciliation”^u we are to approach them, when the “hammer” which is put into our hand is that of the Gospel?

There are others, who, though not thus insensible to their danger,—yea, with their eyes open to see that if they should die as they now are, they must perish, yet linger. They are too young now—it will be time enough to think of these things when they are older. Or, they are too much engaged now—they will wait till their time shall be more their own. Or, they are now in unfavourable circumstances—they will wait for a change of circumstances. Alas! as if they knew the number of their days, and were certified how long they had to live! as if they could say with Joshua, and while it is for a purpose so altogether opposite, “Sun, stand thou still”^v—even till they shall have had their glut of the world; till the lusts of the flesh shall have been satisfied! And as if it were not God that “worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure:”^w but, that it was at our own pleasure to

^s Jer. xxiii. 29.

^t Ezek. xi. 19.

^u 2 Cor. v. 18.

^v Josh. x. 12.

^w Phil. ii. 13.

turn to him when we would ! And as if his long-suffering could not be exhausted ! And is there to be conceived a greater provocation, and that would seem to cry more loudly for instant judgment, than such an abuse of his long-suffering ; to make that which he designs to be what should win us to repentance, a reason why we continue in sin ! And think we, that the deeper root sin has struck, it will the more easily come up ? What ! shall we travel out of our road, and not think of turning into it, till night overtake us ? Will you still drive in and clench the nail, which, you confess, must be drawn out again, or you are lost for ever ? Am I addressing any who are lingering ? “To-day,” then, *another* “to-day, while you hear his voice.”^x—It is another of Satan’s delusions, that it will be time enough *to-morrow*.—But what saith God ? “*Now* is the accepted time ;” does he not say ? “*now* is the day of salvation !”^y “Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found ;” does he not say ? “Call upon him, while he is near.”^z And what says he, if we will *not* ? “Because I have called, and ye refused”—(for *too* familiar the familiar warning cannot be,) “Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof ; I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not hear them ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”^a And will any wait for “a more convenient season ?”^b But will you not make haste, and “prolong not the time,” delay, no, not an hour, to seek the Lord, while he may be found ; to call upon him while he is near ; while the

^x Heb. iii. 7.

^y 2 Cor. vi. 2.

^z Isa. lv. 6.

^a Prov. i. 24—28.

^b Acts xxiv. 25.

door is open, to enter at it; while you have the light, to walk in it?

There are others, of whom we are reminded in this passage, who look back—those who once made a fair promise, but who—(my heart sinks while I think of such,) afterwards disappoint the hopes which had been entertained of them. What! and has the morning which opened so brightly, been clouded over? After such a beginning, as “in the Spirit,” has there been an ending “in the flesh?”^c Upon the bed of sickness—what relenting, what repenting, what resolving! And is it, as when Pharaoh, as soon as “the rain, and the hail, and the thunders had ceased, hardened his heart, and sinned yet more, he and his servants?”^d Under the present impression of the Gospel, the whole soul seemed to melt—And was it then no more than when Saul relented and wept^e—was it no more than when the children of Israel “turned early and inquired after the Lord, and remembered that God was their strength, and the high God their Redeemer,”^f while yet, (as the Psalmist had too much reason to add,) “their heart was not whole with him, neither continued they stedfast in his covenant?”^g Am I addressing any who have looked back—any, whose impressions, like the figures drawn upon the strand, have been washed away by the returning tide of the world’s temptations? Are there any present, whose hearts once seemed to respond to every touch of the finger of God upon them, but which respond no longer? Yet God forbid that we should despair even of such! Despair of them! What! when we hear, “Return, thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord;” and again, “Turn, ye backsliding children, saith the Lord;” and again, “Turn, ye

^c Gal. iii. 3.

^d Exod. ix. 34.

^e 1 Sam. xxiv. 16.

^f Psa. lxxviii. 34, 35.

^g Psa. lxxviii. 37.

backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings;" and again, in one and the same overture of mercy, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord."^h Of whom, then, let his backsliding have been what it may, are we to despair?

There are others to whom we are here reminded to address ourselves, who, though, like Lot, they may be on their way indeed to the mountain, may have taken warning to escape from the coming judgment, yet require to be *hastened*. And is there not what shall prevail to hasten them, in what the scene of awe, which we are contemplating, *represents*? The angels, while they saw the burning tempest gathering, the fire and brimstone ready to burst over the devoted cities, wanted not wherewith to hasten Lot. And what does not the eye of *faith* see? What does not the ear of *faith* hear? What! but that "the Lord is at hand!" "The Judge is at the door!" "The time is short!" "Behold, I come quickly!" do not we hear? It will not be long, (not as *faith* computes,) before "the trumpet shall sound," and "all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation."ⁱ It will not be long, before, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth with the works that are therein shall be burnt up."^k "Behold! the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints," (do not we hear,) "to execute judgment!"^l "Behold! he cometh with clouds," (is it not sounding in our ears,) "and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him!"^m And is there wanting what shall prevail to hasten those who, if they do *not* hasten,

^h Jer. iii. 12, 14, 22, 1.

ⁱ John v. 29.

^k 2 Pet. iii. 10.

^l Jude 14.

^m Rev. i. 7.

will be *involved* in what is coming upon the earth, and its wailing population?

And when, on the other hand, we think what a refuge there will be in that day, what perfect security, for as many as shall have “fled for refuge to lay hold upon the blessed hope set before them,” that, as when it was said to Lot, “Haste thee, escape thither, for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither,” it will not be till those who are “the salt of the earth,” shall have been taken out of it, not till those who are Christ’s, whether in their graves, or alive at his coming, shall have been “caught up in the clouds,”ⁿ that the remaining corrupt mass will be consigned to the burning flame. And then, as we look *beyond* the conflagration, to when, out of the wreck and ashes of a world lying in wickedness, shall emerge the “new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness,”^o where the redeemed shall have their everlasting habitations—to when every vestige of sin, and of God’s wrath against it, shall have been obliterated—to when the sun shall rise, (not as on that morning upon Sodom,) or rather, the light of the Lamb and the glory of God, when of the sun there will be no longer need,^p upon a creation, of which, when all things shall have been made new, it will be again to be pronounced that “God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good,”^q—is there not in such a prospect—in the prospect of the judgment which is coming upon the world that now is, of the exemption and preservation from its doom of those who are not of it, and of their inheritance in the new heavens and new earth by which it will be succeeded, what may well prevail to hasten, and that *will* hasten, in their escape from the defilements with which they are surrounded, and in the race for “the prize of the high calling of God

ⁿ 1 Thess. iv. 17.

^o 2 Pet. iii. 13.

^p Rev. xxi. 23.

^q Gen. i. 31.

in Christ Jesus," all to whom we do not seem as those that mock?

Yet I cannot conclude, after what we heard in the morning, and as we are approaching the day which it has pleased God in his mercy to put it into the heart of our gracious Sovereign and her advisers to set apart, under the pressure of national calamity, as a day of national humiliation," without repeating the earnest desire which was expressed, that it should be observed by us as a day of *real* humiliation. For have we not *cause* for humiliation, my brethren? God grant to us a deeper and deeper sense of what cause there is for it! Yet, be the cause for humiliation what it may, have we not proportionate encouragement? Even when it had been said of Jerusalem, "They are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitantst hereof as Gomorrah,"^s at the time when it was the complaint of the afflicted people, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" was not the prophet directed to say to them, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he should turn from his sin and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"^t Nay, when the Lord had said, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it,"^u had there been then *another* cry—a cry like that of penitent Nineveh^v—who can doubt but that he who said, "If I find ten righteous in the city, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake,"^w would have revoked the sentence which had been pronounced upon Sodom itself? While in our own, and in the national abounding sin, we have such

^r March 24, 1847.

^s Jer. xxiii. 14.

^t Ezek. xxxiii. 10, 11.

^u Gen. xviii. 20, 21

^v Jonah iii 5—10.

^w Gen. xviii. 32.

cause for humiliation, what encouragement we also have, —assured as we are, that “where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound”—to turn to him that smiteth us, to turn to him, abounding in hope, that if we “put away the evil of our doings from before his eyes, cease to do evil and learn to do well; though our sins were as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they were red like crimson, they shall be as wool!”^x

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have now heard with our outward ears, may through thy grace be so inwardly grafted in our hearts, that any present who have not yet fled for refuge from the wrath to come, may delay to do so no longer; and that such of us as *have* so fled to lay hold upon the blessed hope that is set before us, may be as those who are in earnest, as who have indeed escaped out of a world lying in wickedness, and are no longer lingering in its precincts, but “cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, and perfecting holiness in thy fear,” and to thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

^x Isa. i. 16—18.



SERMON III.

REPENTANCE.

ZECHARIAH xii. from the 10th verse to the end of the chapter, and the 1st verse of the 13th chapter.

“ And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born.

“ In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

“ And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.

“ The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart.

“ All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

“ In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.”

THE allusions and illustrations in this passage, are sufficiently familiar and intelligible. We do not want to be told what the sorrow of a bereaved parent is. We can picture to ourselves the state of Egypt, when all the first-born were struck dead.^a Nor have we any difficulty in understanding the universal grief of Israel, upon the occasion of the great

^a Exod. xii. 29, 30.

national calamity referred to, when that best of kings, Josiah, was slain in battle at Megiddo.^b

But the mourning which the allusions are employed to illustrate, is not so familiar. The mourning which is occasioned by "looking upon Him whom we pierced," is, alas! to the great mass of those whom it concerns, utterly unintelligible. Nay, but do they even look upon him? "We hid as it were our faces from him,"^c says the prophet.

Yet there *is* such mourning; and the subject presented for our consideration in this passage is what it *is*, and what is the *source* of it. And while we are thus engaged, let it be present to our minds, that "blessed are they who so mourn," and they only.

For though the passage would seem to apply, emphatically and prophetically, to the mourning which there will be when the spirit of grace and of supplication shall have been poured out upon the Jewish nation; and, in "Him whom they pierced," as it was to a certain extent on the day of Pentecost, they shall see the promised Saviour, and hope of Israel; it is not, therefore, to be *restricted* to the Jewish nation. For were no *others* implicated in what is to give occasion to the mourning? No: it is not upon those who cried out "Crucify him, crucify him," upon the high priest who condemned him, upon the Roman governor who "delivered him to their will," the whole guilt lies. It is not so much the executioner, who is the cause of the death of the criminal, nor yet the judge who pronounces sentence upon him—His actual crucifiers were but the representatives of our whole race: *we* pierced him! Every man born into the world, as he is regarded in his fallen nature, was an accomplice in the conspiracy against the Son of God—participated in the guilt of his crucifixion! "He was despised and rejected," not by that generation only—"He was despised and

^b 2 Chron. xxxv. 22—25.

^c Isa. liii. 3.

rejected *of men*,"^d says the prophet. It was an exhibition such as there never was, of the "enmity of the carnal mind against God!"

This is our deep condemnation, that man—alienated man—not only rejected God in *heaven*, but that when "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" appeared upon *earth*, the same alienation manifested itself; that he was the object of the same unabated enmity, was "despised and rejected" upon *earth*; that not only upon the throne of *heaven*, but that "God manifest in the *flesh*" was rejected—"We will not have this man to reign over us."^e In what colours does not sin appear, when we see in it the expression of such enmity against Christ—when we see it stained with the blood, guilty of the death of Christ! *Sin* crucified the Lord of glory. And yet, neither let us regard it as an *abstraction*, any more than as confined to the actual perpetrators. *Your* sin and *my* sin, "the iniquity of us *all*," was concerned and concurred in the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God.

Ah! and is it only that he was pierced *by* our sins, but was he not also pierced *for* them? I once heard from the master of a deaf and dumb institution in Italy, that one of the pupils, in consequence of having been shown continually by his parents, as often as he did anything wrong, a picture of the Saviour writhing in agony upon the cross, was under the impression that he had been the worst and wickedest of men; as though the object of his parents, in pointing to the picture, had been to deter him from such practices as those of which, in the instance before him, he saw the consequences, and which, if he allowed himself in them, might, in his own case, lead to a like tragical end. What may we suppose him to have felt, when he came to understand, that if the holy Jesus was treated as the worst and wickedest of

^d Isa. liii. 3.

^e Luke xix. 14.

men, it was for *us* and *our* wickedness he was so treated ; that “ he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities ;” that it was in order that “ we might be healed,” he endured the “ stripes ;” that the explanation of his agony was, that “ the chastisement of our peace was upon him !”^e

Was it not thus—that the wounds which sin had made, according to the promise in the text, became a fountain to wash away the sin that made them ?—“ A fountain was opened” in them for “ sin and uncleanness.” Out of that side which we pierced, issued forth a stream to cleanse those who pierced it.

It is, as we look upon him in such an association—in the two-fold association, as pierced *for* us, while he was pierced *by* us—as we see those arms which we had nailed to the accursed tree, extended to *embrace* those who nailed him to it—as we hear the voice from it “ Look unto me and be saved”^f—it is, as we see a *throne of grace* erected upon the cross, that they are pierced themselves, who pierced him. It is, as we see God, in this his crucified Son, through the means of his crucifixion itself, reconciling to himself those who crucified him, not imputing, no, not this, no more than any of their other trespasses unto them, blotting out their sins in the blood which they had themselves shed—it is, as we look upon him under such an impression of our sin, on the one hand, and of his love, on the other, that the heart of stone relents, melts, and that, as those mourn who are visited with the heaviest *affliction*, we mourn and are in bitterness for our *sins*. It is “ the Spirit of *grace*,” when, according to the promise, it is poured out upon us, the Spirit impressing us with all the grace of Christ, as well as with our own sin, that smites the rock within us, that the waters gush out. It is, as we taste that the Lord is so

^e Isa. liii. 5.

^f Isa. xlv. 22.

gracious, that sin appears exceeding sinful. It is, according to those words in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel, "when He is *pacified* towards us for all that we have done," that "we remember and are confounded, and open our mouth no more, because of our shame," when we see "the Lord our God *pacified* towards us for all that we have done"^h against him.

Such was the sorrow of that "woman who was a sinner, whose sins, which were many, had been *forgiven* her."ⁱ It was, as she saw in one view, her own abounding sin, and the grace that abounded beyond her sin, the flood gushed out with which she washed the Saviour's feet. Such was the sorrow which has been already referred to, as a partial fulfilment of the promise in the text, when at those words of Peter, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," they were stung with compunction, and "pricked in their hearts" cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Such, however, *became* their sorrow, when Peter added, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."^j Then, however, would their hearts bleed, when they were promised the forgiveness of their sins, in the name of Him who had been the victim of them!

Nor is it for his own sin only, he, who has come under such impressions, will mourn and be in bitterness; but for sin universally, as by which, while man is degraded and destroyed, God is so fearfully insulted and dishonoured. The licentious jest, profane mirth, would sound in his ears as if he heard some bosom friend vilified, or a revered parent derided. To be capable of any familiarity with sin, would seem to him, as though he should take to his bosom the murderer of that revered parent, or beloved friend. It

^h Ezek. xvi. 63.ⁱ Luke vii. 37, 38.^j Acts ii. 37, 38.

is, as when the righteous soul of Lot “was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked”^k—We partake of his feeling, who cried out, “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law,”^l—of theirs, who “sighed and cried for the abominations of Jerusalem,”^m as well as for their own. In the scene of mourning which is described in the text, while the whole land mourns, and every family apart, there is a mourning for the sin common to all, as well as for the sin of which each individual was conscious in himself.

We have heard something, then, of what the sorrow presented to us in the text is, and what is the source of it. Let us now ask ourselves, my brethren, whether *we* be among those who thus mourn? For as surely as the Spirit of *grace* has been poured out upon us, we *are*. Ah! after this, to “make a mock at sin,” or to make light of it! Do we hear him, as from the cross, “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto *my* sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger!”—in the fierce anger to which he subjected himself for our sins—And is there no sorrow on *our* part, whose the sins were? “Is it then nothing to you—(is it without reason he complains)—“is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?”ⁿ Alas! with how many it is, as if it *were* nothing to them! It is with the great mass, according to those words in the twenty-second chapter of Isaiah, at the twelfth and thirteenth verses, “In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and mourning, and baldness, and girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” Are *we*, let us ask ourselves, among those who mourn as he would have us?

In the Confession, in which we joined an hour ago, while

^k 2 Pet. ii. 7. ^l Psa. cxix. 136. ^m Ezek. ix. 4 ⁿ Lam. i. 12.

we repeated "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep; We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts; We have offended against thy holy laws; We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and have done those things which we ought not to have done;"—as our past history, all this our neglect of God and his service, and the indulgence of the devices and desires of our own hearts which we confessed, as it all passed in rapid review before us, were we conscious of anything of this mourning?—if, indeed, it passed in review before us at all! And then, in the Absolution, when forgiveness was pronounced—(in the case, however, of that woman who was a sinner, but a *forgiven* sinner, her wounds were made to bleed afresh, even by the balm which healed them) are we as those who "remember and are confounded, and would open their mouth no more because of their shame, when we hear that the Lord our God is pacified towards us for all that we have done?"

Ah! and do we, according to the mourning described in the text, do we mourn apart, as well as in the congregation? Do we mourn alone and in secret for our *sins*, as we should do, according to the comparison, if an object of our tenderest affection were taken from us? Joseph, when his heart was full, "sought where to weep, and entered into his chamber, and wept there."^o David "went up to the chamber over the gate and wept."^p If our sorrow for sin do not go beyond the confession of it in Church, it is not, however, like the sorrow to which, in the text, it is compared. Overwhelming was the grief of which we read, when the afflicted father burst out, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"^q Yet David mourned for *sin*, as he never mourned for *Absalom*.

^o Gen. xliii. 30.

^p 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

^q Ibid.

Let me ask those of us, who, as they look back upon their past life, see the first pages of it, it may be, stained with many a foul blot; with what feelings, I would ask, are those foul blots regarded by them? Is it, according to a phrase, which makes one shudder, as one hears it, it makes so light of what God regards with such abhorrence,—is it, as though that had been the time for “sowing their wild oats;” or, as any instance of the sins and offences of our youth starts into the mind, do we “abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes?”^r

Were I to live over again, say you not, *converted* sinner, were I to live over again, would I not rather cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, than sin against God, as I have done? Were I, thinks he, as he looks at those who are growing up around him, were I young as you, whilst I felt as I now feel, what glory would I not hope to give to God, serving him from my youth! Would! thinks he, that I could tear out of the book of *my* remembrance as my God has torn out of *His*, the abhorred “sins and iniquities of my youth!”

And shall I not, then, turn to those, who can *yet* give such glory to God, who can *yet* serve him from their youth? And will you not? Will you not give the God who so loved you, the blossom of life, rather than the dregs of it? Will you not give him the youthful vigour of your faculties, the glow of the young affections, the elasticity of the youthful spirits, rather than the leavings of youthful lusts? If sorrow could enter Heaven, if a sigh could be heaved there, if a tear could roll down the cheek of a saint in light, would it not be for the time spent in forgetfulness and to the dishonour of God, which might have been spent to his glory?

If we be true mourners for sin, it will not be without pain and grief we shall recall any, the least portion of life, which was spent otherwise than in his service and to his glory.

^r Job xlii. 6.

It may be, that as you lay upon a bed of sickness, you felt sorrow for your past sins. But have you now a proof of its genuineness, in your abstaining from the things in which you then lamented you had allowed yourself, and in practising the duties which you were then so much concerned you had neglected? Or, are your former habits again indulged—Are former neglects repeated? If it be so, those tears of sickness were not “the tears,” which God “puts into his bottle.” They were as the water rather, with which “the sow” was “washed,” who, because there is no change of nature, “returns to her wallowing in the mire.”

Am I addressing any, in circumstances like those referred to, to illustrate what mourning for sin is—the subjects of afflictive dispensations? The Lord comfort them, as he comforts those who are thus brought to mourn for sin itself—for that sin, *without* which, affliction would be *unknown* among us! For how often does not the Lord in his mercy make sorrow, such as yours, a stepping-stone to that sorrow which leaves behind it “the peaceable fruits of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby!”^s “And when he was in affliction,” as we read in the 33rd chapter of the 2nd book of Chronicles—to refer to an instance which might give heart to the most desponding, might encourage the chief and the most confirmed of sinners—“And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And the Lord was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.”^t The Lord grant it may be good for *you* also to be in trouble, by its making you to be in trouble, or, in yet greater trouble, for your *sins*!

My brethren, do we indeed mourn for sin? How careful

^s Heb. xii. 11.

^t 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

we shall then be, to avoid everything that would be a temptation to us to defile ourselves again with it; not lightly to go into company that would be dangerous to us: not to frequent places of amusement, in which we might have reason to apprehend danger; not to expose ourselves unnecessarily, where the world has it all its own way; not to read books which, though we might think they would not shake our principles, might yet leave a stain upon the imagination. We "shall hate even the garment spotted by the flesh."^u The admonition to the Corinthians, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,"^v will be ringing in our ears continually.

And shall we not, then, be all eyes and watchfulness, that there be nothing about us which would be the occasion of sin *to others*: that no words escape from our lips, which would be as sparks upon the tinder of corrupt human nature, which would inflame bad passions, provoke evil tempers, give a tone of levity to the conversation, or give birth to uncharitable surmises, to uncharitable observations upon others; that there be nothing in our habits and practices, which would be the occasion of sin to others? What should we have thought of those at Ephesus who made the silver shrines for the goddess Diana,^w if, after their conversion, they had, for the sake of the gain, continued the manufacture of the idolatrous shrines? What should we have thought of their own conversion from sin, if it had been no restraint upon them from being accessory to the sin of others? Nay, if we be in any sympathy with him, who, if his eating meat, as he said, should, from any misconstruction of it, from any ill use that might be made of his allowing himself his Christian liberty, be to others the occasion of sin, would not eat

^u Jude 23.

^v 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

^w Acts xix. 24.

meat while the world lasted^x—if we have any feeling in common with Paul, we shall not only be watchful against what is of an injurious tendency in itself, but shall be ready to give up what were as lawful as the use of meat, rather than be to others the occasion of sin.

Nor is it only watchful we shall be not to draw others *into* sin, when we are thus affected towards it; but shall we not, also, do what in us lies to draw others *out* of sin? I need not say, that for those of our own household, we shall not be unconcerned. But our own domestic circle will be the first only, round which wider and wider circles will form themselves, as the objects of like solicitude. Yes, real mourning for sin would be of itself a security for abundant labours of love, in behalf of those who are yet *in* their sins. It would of itself secure, while we think of the ravages which sin has made, and is still making the world over, a more than nominal interest in the labours of those Societies which have for their object to “turn men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.”^y In every such attempt in behalf of our own country—(and is there no demand for such attempts?) we shall warmly participate and co-operate; we shall hear a voice from *beyond* our own country, “Come over and help us;”^z we shall not be content to leave the heathen in their foul idolatry; we shall not be unmoved by the blindness and degradation of those “of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came;”^a we shall be more than nominal supporters of the several Christian associations which would spread the knowledge of Him who “taketh away the sin of the world,” through every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people *in* it.

And will you not then be in *prayer* for those who have received the commission to preach the Gospel, that Gospel which would “bless every man in turning him from his

^x 1 Cor. viii. 13. ^y Acts xxvi. 18. ^z Acts xvi. 9 ^a Rom ix 5

iniquity?" For those especially, I need not say, upon whose ministry you attend yourselves, you will be in prayer, that they may "not run in vain, nor labour in vain;" that as "ambassadors for Christ," they may deliver their blessed message faithfully; that they may save their own souls, as well as yours; that while they have the treasure in earthen vessels, it may yet come in its purity and in all its love to *you!* Are you not, at this moment, breathing desires towards God, or, as you are put in remembrance, you will, that the message from him, which is now being delivered, may not be as water spilt upon the ground? My brethren, with what expectations shall we not be able to address you, if there be such prayer for us, if we know that you are in prayer for us, if you be to us what Aaron and Hur were to Moses!^b Oh! then, many a one, on leaving Church, will go home, in the state of mind in which the eunuch of Ethiopia returned from where he had been to worship;^c or, if you go in company, it will be as the disciples on the road to Emmaus,^d talking together of all that you have heard, rather than of the world and the things of the world, and, perhaps, your hearts burning within you, as did theirs.

No; nor will other intercessions—those which are put into our mouth, in the Liturgy, "for all sorts and conditions of men"—they will not be petitions of form with us. "We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord," will be said, as if we *desired* to be heard in our intercessions. There will be some *heart* in the prayers which we profess to offer up for the Queen and those in authority over us, that the throne may be established in righteousness, that it may be surrounded with men fearing God, that our magistrates and legislators may "maintain truth;" not as if, according to the modern discovery, they had *no concern* with it, but that, as those who are charged with the weightiest responsibilities, while

^b Exod. xvii. 12.

^c Acts viii. 27, 28.

^d Luke xxiv. 13, 14, 32.

they enjoy the greatest opportunities, they may “maintain truth,” as well as “execute justice,” that sin may be frowned upon in high places, and the truth, “as it is in Jesus,” find champions in high places, and true religion bless the land.

Oh! for more of mourning for the sins which *defile* the land, and which, if there be not such mourning for them, may yet forfeit for us, and *will*, our distinguished privileges and blessings; while, in one part of the united kingdom, *blood* sends up so loud a cry, and so much of *other* flagrant sin is the reproach of Protestant *England!* Nay, but would it not seem as if our very foundations were giving way? In the relaxed tone of the public mind with respect to those great principles, sealed with the blood of our martyrs, to which, as a people, we owe so much of our superiority and prosperity, in the faint and whisper-like protest, to which that of the Reformation has died away, against the corruptions which are opposed to those principles, in the grey hairs which are coming over our Protestantism—is there no cause for alarm in such declension, none for mourning? For is it not, as if, instead of clinging to our national distinction and peculiarity, as the source of our strength and greatness, we were for assimilating ourselves to other nations, and making flesh our arm, rather than the truth of God?

To the question, whether we be among those who mourn according to the mourning described in the text, we have now heard, my brethren, what may supply us with the answer. For we have had before us, how such mourning will exhibit and express itself. And in not a few of us, I trust, there *is* such evidence of sorrow for sin.

And yet, might it not be asked of the true mourners in Zion, whether they be such mourners as they *would* be, even for their *own* sins? Have you never a consciousness that it is not so much “against *thee*, against *thee* only have I

sinned,"^e that has distressed you, as that the sin has disturbed your own peace of mind, and perhaps your domestic peace; or has involved other painful consequences? Let us "look upon him whom we pierced," till what wrings our heart be, that we should have sinned against *Him*,—till what barbs our sorrow with its poignancy be, that we should have sinned against such a God and Saviour!

Oh! for more of the abhorrence of *evil*, and holy sensibility to the dishonour of God, which made the soul of *Jesus* so vulnerable, in this sinful and adulterous generation—which made the reproaches of those who reproached God fall with such a weight upon him! If he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,"^f it was his acute sense of *sin* that pointed all his sorrows. "He bore our sins in his body on the tree"^g—his *soul* was pierced by them his life long! To have fellowship in the sufferings of *Jesus*, he must give us of his own sensibility to *sin*, or we cannot drink of the cup which *he* drank of. Oh! and that he *may* give us of it, till even as He was, so may we be in this sinful world!

Yet, before I conclude, let me present a consideration, of which every one will admit the force,—of which indeed you were reminded, my brethren, at the outset,—that "blessed are they who so mourn, for that they shall be comforted."^h *Why* is it for us thus to mourn, do we ask? It is, that our "mourning may be turned into joy,"ⁱ that we may "put off our sackcloth, and be girded with gladness,"^j that "the bones which were thus broken may rejoice."^k It is, that, becoming sensible of the load which there is upon us, we may seek the relief which there is for us from it: that feeling ourselves to be heavy-laden, we may gasp after the rest which is provided for the heavy-laden; that we may cry with mourning Hezekiah, "I am oppressed; undertake

^e Psa. li. 4.^f Isa. liii. 3.^g 1 Pet. ii. 24.^h Matt. v. 4.ⁱ Jer. xxxi. 13.^j Psa. xxx. 11.^k Psa. li. 8.

for me."¹ It is, according to those words in the sixth chapter of Hosea, that He who has "torn" may "heal us," that He who has "smitten" may "bind up" the wound, that "his goings forth may be as the *morning*"—as a bright morning, breaking upon us after a tempestuous night; that he may "come unto us as the *rain*," as the refreshing rain, after a season of scorching heat and exhausting drought. In a word, our Lord would have us to mourn for sin, that we may be prepared for hearing from him, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."^m

Nay, and in the mourning itself, is there mourning *only*? Is there no *star* in the night? But does not the *sun* shine upon the dark cloud?—There is a *rainbow* in such mourning. The covenant of God is in it. It is itself a pledge to us that "the days of our mourning shall be ended."ⁿ

Why is it for us, do we ask, thus to mourn? It is, that in a little while, we may have sunshine without any cloud whatsoever—that God may "wipe away all tears from our eyes." He would have us to mourn for a little season, that we may not be among those who will mourn through eternity; that when those who laugh now, begin their weeping—their "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth"—*we* may enter upon our "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" that when he shall descend in the clouds, and "every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him,"^o it may be for *us* to hear, "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh;"^p that to a degree, as yet incomprehensible to us, He may "give us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."^q

¹ Isa. xxxviii 14.

^m Matt. ix. 2.

ⁿ Isa. lx. 20.

^o Rev. i. 7.

^p Luke xxi. 28.

^q Psa. lxi. 3.



SERMON IV.

JUSTIFICATION.

PSALM xxxii.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

“For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

“For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

“Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

“Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.

“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.”

THE Psalm opens with the conclusion at which the Psalmist had arrived, and in which his mind had found repose, after great agitation. As his psalms open con-

tinually, we may observe, with some chord which was still vibrating, and upon which it was sweet to him to dwell. "Blessed is he," he begins, "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."

He then describes the distress of mind through which he had passed. "When I kept silence"—till he opened his mind to God, that is—for otherwise, silence he had *not* kept—his "bones had waxed old through his roaring all the day long." "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was turned into the drought of summer." *Then*—when his sense of the wrath of God had dried up the moisture within him, had penetrated into his bones, when day and night his hand had been so heavy upon him—as continually, to prepare us for his *grace*, that we may be "as the hart panting after the water-brooks," God in his mercy makes the wrath to be apprehended to which sin has subjected us; instead of letting us continue in the ordinary dream about it, writes the sentence against sin upon our inward parts; brings us into the depths, that we may cry to himself, to bring us out of them—under such pressure of the hand and wrath of God, the Psalmist at length *broke* silence—he "acknowledged his sin to God, his iniquity he no longer hid from him,"—"I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord." As in the 142nd Psalm, when "his spirit was overwhelmed within him" by *other* trouble, he poured out his complaint before his God, and "showed him of his trouble." According to the direction, be it what it may that weighs upon the heart, "in every thing let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."^a The Psalmist found it so—"And thou *forgavest* the iniquity of my sin."

^a Phil. iv. 6, 7.

It is in the enjoyment of this peace, then, he begins, "Blessed is he whose transgression is *forgiven*, and whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Like a ship coming out of stormy seas into port, he casts anchor in the blessed persuasion of God's forgiveness—he is now in smooth water, and enjoys something of the calm which "passeth all understanding."

And if *any* of us would find peace, need I say it, it must be as the Psalmist found it. I am addressing not a few, I rejoice to think, who *have* so found it.

It is true, there is a peace of another kind—peace, *not* the result of such forgiveness—the peace of those, who, if they saw their real state, would see reason to roar as did the Psalmist,—peace, not which God, but which the world gives,—the security of a blind man advancing to the brink of a precipice,—the peace of those who till "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened," could not be persuaded that there was any cause for alarm,—such peace as there was in Sodom and Gomorrah, when it was about to "rain down fire and brimstone" upon them,—the peace into which the great Deceiver still lulls those who are deceived by him, while he persuades them, that live as they will, they "shall not surely die,"—a peace, alas! in which, we hear from our Divine Lord, an awfully large proportion of mankind will be found, in the day in which "the Son of man will be revealed."

But let a man's eyes be opened to discover his *real* state before God; let him apprehend only that one sentence of the word of God, that "*cursed* is every one who continueth not in *every* thing that is written in the law of God to do it,"^b that the curse of God's violated law, even the sentence of everlasting death, is suspended over every one

^b Gal. iii. 10.

as he is in himself, who has not continued in *every* thing that is written in the law of God to do it—let a man only really apprehend this one overwhelming announcement of God's word, and what peace is or can there be for him, but in having his iniquity *forgiven*, and his sin *covered*! It was, as being deeply and experimentally impressed, that in the condition to which sin had reduced us, *other* peace for us there is *none*, the Psalmist reiterated it as he did, that he whose "transgression is forgiven," he whose sin is covered," he "to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity," that he, and he only, is, or can be, "blessed."

Accordingly, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle is laying the foundation of the peace of the Gospel, he refers to this Psalm, as containing the principle of it. "For what saith the Scripture?" he asks,—"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh *not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness. Even as David also," he proceeds, "describeth the blessedness of the man, to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Except in the non-imputation and forgiveness of sin, as in the Psalm, or in the imputation of "righteousness without works," as the Apostle renders it, the blessedness of which they speak, the enjoyment of peace with God, is unattainable.

"*Without* works," says the Apostle emphatically. For what peace can he find in his *works*, who, unless he has performed *every* work, and *continued* in every work pre-

scribed in the divine law—if he has deviated from the law in *any one particular*, is under the *curse* of the law?

“*Without works*”—The justification of a sinner before God is not his *own* work. It is the work of *another*—of Him, who was “made *under* the law,” that he might deliver *us* from the *sentence* of the law; was “made a curse,” that blessing might come upon *us*; was “made sin for us that *we* might be made the righteousness of God in him;” that as he took our sin upon himself, we might, through faith in him, stand before God in his righteousness—in “the righteousness of God,” (as it is again in the third chapter, at the twenty-second verse) in that righteousness with which *alone* God is well-pleased, even *his own*, “which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.” Faith is as the hand with which to lay hold upon Christ. Through faith in him, the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon the conscience, the merits of Christ are applied to ourselves, God regards us, not as we are in ourselves, but in Christ—“accepted in the Beloved.”^c

So that, let us have never so deep a sense of our own sin, and never so clear a perception of the holiness of God, and of the requirements of his holy law, we can yet enjoy perfect peace, while we stand before God, no longer in our sinful selves, no, nor in our own imperfect righteousness, but in the perfect righteousness of Christ, become as our own, through faith.

Not so, in the church of Rome. For can we any longer with safety, however we would desire it, content ourselves always with presenting the truth by itself? Nay, even in the first age of Christianity—such, at all times, the tendency of our fallen nature to corrupt the truth—under what a continual necessity the Apostles found themselves, of guarding those who had embraced the Gospel from being misled and

^c Eph. i. 6.

perverted by the corruptions of it! Do not we indeed hear like warnings from the Saviour himself? As soon as he opened his mouth as a preacher of righteousness, did he not, at the same time, put those whom he addressed upon their guard against a spurious and counterfeit righteousness? If at the approach of danger, “the watchman blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned, their blood shall be required at his hands.”^d And is there not reason to apprehend, that even where there is no disposition to favour the corruptions of the church of Rome, there yet prevails much apathy with respect to them? And is indifference to error, and to such error as that referred to, consistent with loyalty to the truth? He who breathed out so fervently, “Lord, what *love* have I to thy law!” expressed himself with no less fervour, as he thought of what was *opposed* to it: “All *false* ways,” do not we also hear from him?—“all *false* ways I utterly abhor.”^e In contrast, then, with what we have seen to be at the foundation of the Gospel-peace, let us glance, however—and while we do so, the truth itself may stand out more prominently and distinctly—let us, in contrast with what is at the foundation of the peace of the Gospel, turn, for a few moments, to the fundamental error which is opposed to it, in the gospel of Rome. According to which, (as it is taught in their authoritative standards,) it is not so much the application of what Christ has wrought *for* us, as the formation of the new character *in* us, that justifies a man. For the admission that it is in *virtue* of the atonement the inward change is produced, in no wise affects the question between us. The moral renovation *within*, the production of faith, hope, and charity *within* us, is made the *ground*, not, as it is in truth, the *effect* of our justification. So that the eye is taken off from the work of Christ *without* us, to the work wrought *within* us. A man

^d Ezek. xxxiii. 6.

^e Psa. cxix. 97, 104.

is directed to look to *himself*, in the article of his justification, rather than to *Christ*.

But what peace can he find, while he places any dependence upon his own righteousness; while his own righteousness,—wrought in him, it is admitted, through grace, but still the righteousness of one, who, “if he says he has no sin, deceives himself;”—is confronted with the holiness of God, and the requirements of his uncompromising law?

Thus the members of that church are prepared for the other expedients which it provides, very consistently with itself, for tranquillizing the conscience.

In like manner, in the recovery of one, who, in a state of justification, has fallen into sin, his *contrition* for sin—contrition, it is true, inseparable from the enjoyment of forgiveness, but it is made—(a sorrow, that is, corresponding and proportioned to the sin itself, as they speak—as if between that for which God saw no satisfaction to be sufficient but that of his own Son, and any sorrow on the part of those defiled with it, proportion there could be!)—such sorrow is made the *ground* of the forgiveness, as if the tears of repentance, rather than the blood of Christ, washed out the deep stain.

And thus, also, a door is opened for the doctrine of confession and human satisfaction, to supply the *deficiency* of the sorrow.

In contrast with such corruptions of the Gospel, and the sources of so many others—the first links in a long chain of corrupt doctrine—we have before us, in its purity, simplicity, and effectual provision for our peace, the Gospel itself, upon these two fundamental articles.

With respect to our original justification—by the application of the work of Christ through faith, God justifies the ungodly, without any reference to their own works.

In the recovery of one, who, being justified, has fallen into

sin (the case contemplated in the Psalm,) the wounds which had been opened afresh, are again closed, by the repetition—"until seventy times seven," is it not? in answer to the prayer of faith and repentance—of the same unmerited forgiveness; by a renewed application of the blood which "cleanseth from all sin."

So that, let the mind have been never so greatly agitated, the conscience never so much troubled, whether before or after conversion to God, there is repose and peace for it, to the praise of the glory of his grace, in this harbour of the Gospel.

Such the harbour, in which, through faith in Him who was to come, in Him, to whom gave all the Prophets witness, as well as the Apostles, "that whosoever believeth in him should receive forgiveness of sins,"^f the Psalmist found himself! No; no such harbour was it, as to where the ship in distress, is decoyed by false lights, and instead of finding a refuge from the storm, makes shipwreck upon the rocks: but one, in which there is perfect security; for that "there is no condemnation," no, not for those who from first to last are under condemnation in themselves, "who are in Christ Jesus."^g

Nay, and a harbour is it not? for can what the Psalmist says further for our comfort, be presented more truly or more expressively, than by the use of the same figure?—It is one in which there is not only smooth water for the troubled conscience, but a refuge also from all the storms by which, during the remainder of the voyage, we are liable to be assailed. "Thou art my hiding-place," says the Psalmist, "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble." When "by the blood of Jesus" we can approach God without fear, he becomes a refuge to us from all *other* fear. Even as the child flies from danger into its mother's arms, to fly into the arms

^f Acts x. 43.

^g Rom. viii. 1.

of Omnipotence, in their dangers, becomes the privilege of those "whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered." "The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath them are the everlasting arms."^h

And who that knows what he is, and where he is, to what, at any moment he is liable, but will account the blessedness of such protection as equal, (I had almost said,) to that of forgiveness itself! For though it may not be a time of "the great water-floods," which were so familiar to the Psalmist, yet what time is there, in which, in this dangerous world, strong currents are not setting in continually, to drift us out of our course? Nay, and are there no such tides and currents within our own bosom? And who can tell, let it be for the present never so calm, how soon it may be calm no longer? What is it not then to hear, that in "the great water-floods" themselves, there will be nothing for those to fear from them "whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered;" to hear "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee;"ⁱ to hear that "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard for us against him!"^j Or, as it is in the Psalm, (to which one who, as he could find no peace for *himself* but in this same blessed truth, that those who have nothing in themselves to recommend them God justifies freely through their faith in Christ Jesus, made it also the corner-stone of the reformation of the *Church*)—as it is in the psalm, to which Luther, in the times of his great water-floods, so continually referred, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and though the mountains

^h Deut. xxxiii. 27.

ⁱ Isa. xliii. 2.

^j Isa. lix. 19.

shake with the swelling thereof"—For "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."^k Or, is the hour approaching, in which the last enemy will be to be encountered? Let the conflict be what it may, it will not be for such to engage in it, alone! As I lately heard from one *in* the conflict, as she repeated what her God was saying to her, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."^l Or, is the scene before us, when they will say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb?"^m It will be "the blood" and not "the wrath of the Lamb" which will present itself to those who "have washed their robes and made them white" in that blood! In "the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne," a face they will see, not to inspire terror, but to dispel it! While to hide themselves from him, others would welcome annihilation, he will be himself their "hiding-place!" He will "in that great and terrible day," also, "preserve them from trouble," that "we shall have boldness," says the Apostle, "in the day of judgment"ⁿ itself!

But neither is the promise to be passed over, (though the reference to it will take us back from where we are now arrived,) which, as one whose sin no longer separated between him and his God, the Psalmist heard made to him, of direction as well as of protection. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye." For is it not as the promise of "eyes to the blind?" For what else are we in ourselves?—As dependant upon such guidance, as are the blind upon the hand that leads them! Most precious is it to those, whose one

^k Psa. xlvi. 1—3, 7.

^l Isa. xli. 10.

^m Rev. vi. 16.

ⁿ 1 John iv. 17.

object it has become, to walk in the way in which their God would have them to walk, to hear from him, that he will himself guide them in that way. Or as it is in the twenty-fifth Psalm,—“The meek will he teach his way.” It is as in the thirtieth chapter of Isaiah,—“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way.” The Psalmist hears the promise, as of “a cloud,” to direct him in all his future journeyings through the wilderness, and of “a pillar of fire,” to be a light to him in his thickest darkness—And to conduct him whither? (that our thoughts may not be long detained from where they had been directed)—Even to where we shall be in harbour, from which to put out no more to sea, is it not? to a rest, of which that of faith is no more than the commencement; to the “rest which remaineth” for those “whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.”

It was in the contemplation of these transporting privileges of the partaker of the gospel grace, and to which he could set the seal of his own blessed experience, that the Psalmist, tracing them all to their *source*, broke out, as we have been hearing him,—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered! Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity!” To which he could set the seal of his own experience, did I say? For could he not? He, who a little while before, was “roaring” for agony, is now “shouting for joy!”

And let it be well observed, (that none may shut a door against themselves, which the God of all grace would throw wide open to whomsoever would enter it) that what the Psalmist thus says, in his own case, he does not limit to his own case. No, it is not of himself only, he is speaking, as being so blessed. But “Blessed is the *man*” universally, “whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.” Even as the Apostle presents it as a truth of universal appli-

cation, for universal comfort, that by faith in Christ Jesus, without works, God “justifies the ungodly”^q—the ungodly, be they who they may. Nay, and as the Apostle refers to himself as a pattern, that “in him first, Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering, for a *pattern* to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting;”^r in like manner the Psalmist produces himself as an example for the encouragement of others: “For *this*,” says he, (after such an exhibition of mercy and faithfulness in *his* case,)—“For this” —encouraged by *his* success—“shall *every one* that is godly,” (though they were once among the *ungodly*, of whom the Apostle speaks) they shall “pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found;” as at the close of the Psalm, “Shout for joy, *all ye* that are upright in heart.”

Let us draw near to our God, however we may have sinned against him, with a faith which has this stamp of its genuineness upon it—“uprightness of heart”—with “faith unfeigned,”^s as the Apostle calls it; or as it is in the third verse of the psalm, “without guile;” as distinguished from “the double-mindedness”^t of which St. James speaks, from that double-mindedness which hangs and balances between what is of God, and what is of the world, now inclining to God for peace, now to the world for pleasure; which has two faces, one in the hour of devotion for God, another smiling upon what is not of God,—in a word, let the sinner draw near, as one who would have nothing more to do with *sin*, as one who would exchange masters, as responding to the appeal, “Be ye not as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,” as no longer intractable, but bending the neck to the yoke of Christ—in the state of mind, in which he who is justified without works, becomes “zealous of all good

^q Rom. iv. 5.

^r 1 Tim. i. 16.

^s 1 Tim. i. 5.

^t James i. 8.

works:—let us draw near, be we who we may, with a faith which has the eye thus single; in such dependence upon Christ as involves in it the renunciation of all sin—in heart and resolution, however—and *we* are among those whom the Psalmist pronounces blessed, no less blessed than he was himself. It is for *us*, also, to “shout for joy:” for that *our* transgression is forgiven and *our* sin covered; the Lord imputes no iniquity to *us*; an ear is open in heaven to hear *our* sorrows; in the storms of life *we* have an unfailing refuge; in its difficulties and perplexities, an unerring guide; and in prospect, a blessedness, in comparison with which, all our present blessings are but as the first streaks of the morning—such a *day* is about to break upon us!—when, however, it will be acknowledged, (though, under the pressure of present trials and infirmities, it might not have been always so apparent) that “*blessed* are they whose iniquity is forgiven and whose sin is covered!”

Yet I cannot conclude, after such a view of the riches of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and his great love with which he hath loved us, without calling upon those who are the objects of it, to pour out their hearts before him in the praises and thanksgivings which it demands of them. Is it not for us to begin the song of heaven upon earth, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever?”^u

And next to his gift of the Gospel itself, is it not for us to bless and praise him for the blessed restoration of it, when the love which it breathes, and the grace which it exhibits, had been obscured, as they were, and intercepted; when it had become altogether another Gospel, through the traditions and impositions of men? May He in his great mercy preserve it to us as it is reformed and restored! And

^u Rev. v. 13.

may we not venture, notwithstanding existing dangers, to interpret His preservation of it to us, in times past, by so many signal interpositions of his providence, and the no ambiguous influence which it is at this present time exercising upon so many of its true disciples among us, as indications that, be the struggle what it may which will be to be sustained for it, we shall yet be blest with it among us, and permitted to hand it down unimpaired to those who come after us?

For such, however, as are in the state of mind described in the Psalm, there will be nothing to fear, from anything that would come between them and *grace*. Nay—let there be anything of the Psalmist's apprehension of what sin is, and there will be no danger, when Christ's gospel is presented, lest the preference be given to *another* gospel. Let us be only adequately impressed with the state of ruin in which we are, with the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its deserts, and our sense of the utter disproportion between our desperate case, and any remedies proposed for our relief, except that of infinite grace, will be of itself a protection to us, not only from the flagrant and openly avowed substitution of salvation by works for that of grace, but from our acceptance of anything that would "heal the wound slightly," in the place of the Gospel of the grace of God itself.

Meanwhile, we shall not be insensible to the condition of those to whom Christianity is presented *without its grace*, the Gospel *without its Gospel*. We shall not be unprepared to respond to the appeal^v which is about to be made to us, on behalf of those whom a yet sorer and more grievous famine is afflicting, than that of the necessaries of life—a famine of what, to those who are supplied with it, is a stay and staff, though that of bread should fail them: we shall

^v On behalf of the Irish Society.

be prepared to take part in the exertions which are being made, and with so much prospect of success—nor without success already—to extend to those objects of all compassion, the victims of blind superstition and priestly domination in unhappy Ireland, through the medium of that language of theirs, against which neither their own prejudices, nor yet the power which is exercised over them can prevail, the Christianity of the Reformation and the Bible.

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that as those whose “iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered,” we may apply ourselves to all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in ; that thy exceeding grace and love shed abroad in our hearts may be the spring of a life devoted to thy service and to thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



SERMON V.

CONFORMITY TO CHRIST.

1 JOHN iii. 2, 3.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

“And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

WHEN it was last my privilege to address you, my brethren, we had before us the blessedness of those “whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered,”^a who, without anything in themselves to recommend them to the favour of God, while, in themselves, they have altogether forfeited it, through faith in Him whom God hath set forth for a propitiation, are restored to his favour, “accepted in the Beloved,” and live in the perpetual enjoyment of the Divine favour, “the blood of Jesus Christ” still “cleansing them from all sin.”

In the passage which we have *now* heard, their state of perfect blessedness,—the blessedness which will be theirs hereafter, is presented to us. For though we know not what we shall then be, this, however, we know, says the Apostle, that we shall be like the blessed Saviour himself. And in that likeness alone, thought he, what blessedness will there not be! Nay; and is it not in such likeness (according to what he adds) that not a little of the *present* happiness of the Christian consists? For that every man who hath

^a Psa xxxii. 1.

“hope” in Christ for *hereafter*, “purifieth himself even as Christ is pure,” *here*.

It is this our *present* conformity to the Saviour, as following upon our acceptance in him, that I would propose for our consideration to-day. And in such conformity is there not blessedness? What! not in becoming in any measure like Him, of whom when, through the mist of intervening ages, the prophetic eye caught a glimpse, the words flew out, “Thou art fairer than the children of men,”^b—who, in another prophetic description, is compared to “the lily, and the rose of Sharon,”^c—who, when at length he appeared among us, and by the voice from Heaven was singled out from the human race, as “in whom the Father was well pleased,” drew all men to Himself, who had “heard and learned of the Father!”

For that he had “no form nor comeliness” for *others*, that others “saw no beauty in him that they should desire him,” that “he was despised and rejected” by others, was an evidence of the darkness (oh! and of what darkness!) that was in *them*; not any disparagement of the attraction that was in *him*—as in his own words; “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”^d For *was* there, therefore, no such beauty in him? As well might it be asked, Is there no beauty in the lily, nor fragrance in the rose, because the brute animals, who have no faculties for the *perception* of what is fragrant or beautiful, will trample upon such flowers, as upon common weeds?

No; nor does it exempt any from the condemnation, though there should be a consciousness of complacency, if not of emotion, in the contemplation of so perfect a character. There may be pictures of him in the imagination,—an admiration of him, there may be, like that of the

^b Psa. xlv. 2.

^c Cant. ii. 1.

^d John iii. 19.

works of nature, or of art, while yet *practically* “he is despised and rejected.”

The only evidence of an impression of him upon us, of any value, is in our *conformity* to him. Why is it, that in a part of Scripture, which has been now referred to, the church is compared herself to the lily,—the church in this world to “the lily among thorns,”^e—that it is said of her, that she has “milk and honey under her tongue,” that she hath “doves’ eyes;”^f why is it that the church is so described, but because the Saviour’s own image is stamped upon her, that she becomes assimilated to himself, is cast in the mould of his own perfections? What the Apostle says to the Philippians, with respect to the great humility which was exhibited in our Divine Lord, is to be extended to every grace that shone forth in him—“Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.”^g For that “every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

Is it not, then, deserving of inquiry—of greater attention, however, than what is usually bestowed upon it,—by what means such conformity is to be attained: as also, to what extent it is to be aimed at by us? To the one question and the other we are supplied with the answer, in the passage before us. Why is it, according to the Apostle, that those who are his, will be like him hereafter? Why, but because they will then see him, no longer as “through a glass darkly,” but “as he is?” To the clearness of the vision will correspond the perfection of the likeness. And in proportion as we see him as he is, now, we now become like him. As when Moses, after having seen the Divine glory in the mount, came down with his face shining to the people, his glory is in measure reflected upon us below, as it will be *without* measure above. It is as when, on the

^e Cant. ii. 2.

^f Cant. iv. 1, 11.

^g Phil. ii. 5.

other hand, we are under the fascination of this present evil world, the mind takes the colour, receives the impress of the image and likeness of the world.

But *how* is it for us, in our present state, to see him in any measure "as he is?" Does he not supply the answer himself, when he says, that "the *pure in heart* shall see him?"^h If the gross breath of sense, if the steam of our sensual nature dim the eye, if the mirror, upon which is to be reflected the image of the heavenly, be tarnished by impure exhalations from the earthly, if we think to see "the glory of the Lord" through the dense medium of the flesh and the world, it were as though we should think to see the beauties of the landscape, through an impenetrable fog—if I should not rather say, in midnight darkness! "He that doeth evil," says the Apostle, "hath not seen him."ⁱ The god of this world *blinds* the eyes of those who give themselves to it, that the image of the God of Heaven cannot be discerned by them.

But in the *gospel*—if I may so speak, an operation is performed upon the eye, even by the hand of the Spirit of God, by which it is purged from the film of the flesh. As in the words of the Prophet: "In that day the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness;"^j or as in our Lord's own words: "I am come into the world that they which see not might see,"^k—that they might see *himself*; as when the scales fell from the eyes of Saul, (from the eyes of the inner, as well as of the outward Saul) "that he might see that just One."^l

Yes, and in the whole progress of the conformity to the Saviour, there is a *continual* removal—so deep the root of what is to be removed—a continual removal is there of what, while it clouds our perception of him, at the same time renders us so unlike him. Every branch in him is still being

^h Matt. v. 8.

ⁱ 3 John 11.

^j Isa. xxix. 18.

^k John ix. 39.

^l Acts xxii. 14.

purged; the old man is being put off, to the last. If the new-born babes are to be nourished with the milk of the word, they must "lay aside," says St. Peter, "all guile,"^m and other like dispositions of their corrupt nature. "Laying apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," says St. James to such, "receive with meekness the engrafted word."ⁿ "Laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," says the Apostle to the believing Hebrews, "let us run the race," (thus disencumbered,) "looking unto Jesus."^o As the sculptor, when he has taken in hand the block of marble, never ceases to chisel away the inequalities and unevennesses, till the statue correspond to the conception which he has formed in his mind—even so, in the hand of the Divine Artist, as many as are being made meet to be living stones, and polished corners in his temple, from the time when they are hewn out of the quarry of nature, are subjected to a process by which the deformities and ruggednesses of nature are being continually removed. The Apostle accordingly, in speaking of the conformity to which we are to attain, addresses himself not as to Angels, but as to those who, while the same mind is being formed in them which was in Christ Jesus, are in need of continual purification from what is of an opposite character, in their own. "Every man that hath this hope in him, *purifieth* himself."

Meanwhile, with the eye thus purged, and fixed upon the Divine model, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image"^p—beholding him in the glass of the Gospel, in which, while he presents himself to us in all his attractions, the love, of which we are ourselves the objects, is continually beaming forth upon us; while to relieve us from the despondency into which, in the consciousness of our short-comings, we might sink,

^m 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

^o Heb. xii. 1, 2.

ⁿ James i. 21.

^p 2 Cor. iii. 18.

and when, it may be, by the breaking out of corruption, the likeness, after some little progress in it, seems utterly defaced, we have the resource, ever at hand, of "the blood which cleanseth from all sin," cleanseth those "who are walking in the light as he is in the light," from all their sinful infirmities, and sinful deficiencies, and sinful inconsistencies; to which is to be added for our further encouragement, as we think of our utter impotence in ourselves, that we are his own "workmanship," shaped and moulded by his own creative hand, that we are as the clay, while He is himself the potter; or, as in the passage now referred to, that "we are changed into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Such, then, in a few words, are the means by which the conformity is produced. It is, as, with the eye purged, we behold our Divine model in the glass of the Gospel, as in which all his attractions, and Divine perfections, and the love of which we are the objects, are being continually presented to us, that we are "changed into the same image," inwrought in us as are those his perfections, by his own Spirit; while in the view of the blood which still cleanses the conscience, we are not, by any short-comings, nor yet by the breaking out of corruptions, discouraged from *pursuing* the conformity.

With respect to the other question, (if the answer to it has not been in some measure anticipated,)—to what extent such conformity is to be attempted,—it is obvious that, if we are to purify ourselves as He is pure, it is no *partial* conformity that is to satisfy us; that it is not to a conformity to this or that *part*, only, of the character of the Saviour, we are to apply ourselves. As "out of his fulness we receive grace for grace," he would see the grace in *us* correspond, even as the impression to the seal, to the grace which is in *himself*. As, when Elisha restored the dead

child to life, he applied his lips to the child's lips, and his eyes to the child's eyes, and his hands to the child's hands, and stretched himself upon the child,^a it is for *us*, in respect of our Divine Saviour, as with *her* touch who "touched the hem of his garment,"^r to touch him at every point, to place ourselves under the whole length and breadth of his perfections, till there be an universal correspondence between the Divine original and ourselves. To become meek and lowly in heart as he was, patient as he was patient, forgiving as he was forgiving, dead to the world as he was dead to it; to become like him who "pleased not himself," like him who "went about doing good," like him who would not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," like him whose "meat and drink it was to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish his work," is, in our measure, to be *our* meat and drink, the one and continual object of life it is to be with us.

No; nor is it for us to be satisfied, if we are to purify ourselves "even as he is pure," without a continual approximation. It is a conformity which is to be progressive, as well as universal. As the painter—for while such imitation of the character of the Saviour is before us, illustrations from what is familiar in the attempts of art, and the imitations of nature, continually suggest themselves—as the portrait painter, I was going to say, is not satisfied with the first draught and general outline, but would, by sitting after sitting, still *fill up* his outline; applies himself to catch every minuter shade of resemblance, to convey every touch of expression and character, till the likeness be as perfect as art can make it,—even so is it for *us*, in the likeness which *we* are attempting, to advance from one degree of resemblance to another, "from glory to glory," (as the Apostle expresses it,) "till we come to the perfect

^a 2 Kings iv. 34.

^r Matt. ix. 20.

man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."^s

Does it seem to any, visionary, what has been described? I could have wished, had the time permitted it, to have presented, in the life and character of him who calls us to be "followers of him, as *he* was of Christ,"^t various particulars, in which the conformity was exhibited, as the conformity of one who, while he was a follower of his Divine Master in the whole range and in all the variety of his graces, neither "counted himself to have apprehended," as long as anything remained to be apprehended by him. For the present, however, I will content myself with referring to *another*, as in whom—in one passage of his life, or rather in that of his death,—in the two graces which are especially characteristic of Christianity, the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, even as face answereth to face, displayed itself. Did the Saviour, while he was the object of infuriated malignity, breathe from his dying lips inextinguishable love? "Father, forgive them!" did he pray? "for they know not what they do."^u And so did dying Stephen—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"^v—was not such the prayer, while they were gnashing upon him with their teeth and stoning him, of the Saviour-like Stephen? Did Jesus exhibit to the last unshaken faith? Said he to Him who had seemed to have forsaken him, "Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit?"^w And was not Stephen's last breath spent in a like act of faith, as he turned from his persecutors to him in whom he believed, and said, "Lord Jesus! receive my spirit?"^x If the face of Stephen shone "as it had been the face of an angel,"^y it was the visible lustre of his inner man, beaming with the reflection of "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

^t Eph. iv. 13. ^u 1 Cor. xi. 1. ^v Luke xxiii. 34. ^w Acts vii. 60.

^x Luke xxiii. 46. ^y Acts vii. 59. ^z Acts vi. 15.

Nay, and is there not “a cloud of witnesses,” and of our own as well as of other times, to the practicability of exhibiting in *ourselves*, through the transforming power of the Gospel, the same mind which was in Christ Jesus ?

With respect to the means, however, by which such conformity is to be attained, I could wish to make two remarks more,—the one, that, as it is by the habitual contemplation of the Saviour we become thus assimilated to him, it concerns us not a little, that the mind be not habitually abroad in the outward scene, that it be not in a state of habitual dissipation and distraction, or it will be the image of frivolity, nay, of what is earthly and sensual, that will be imprinted upon it, rather than of what is heavenly and divine.

And surrounded as we are, whether we will or not, with outward objects, and engaged necessarily in outward occupations, it will be not a little subservient to the assimilation, if links of association be formed in the mind, between what is presented to us from without, and that Gospel through which the Saviour is presented to us ; (of which there are instances not a few in the Gospel itself)—that the things around us and with which we are conversant, instead of banishing and excluding him from the thoughts, may be the occasion of recalling him,—yes, and of presenting him in a constant variety of new lights, and in connection with the external circumstances, the occupations, the duties, the trials, among which he moved himself, and in which our conformity to him is to be exhibited.

The other remark that I would make, is this,—that to judge of what were better declined and avoided by us, it is not only to be considered, whether this or that would be out of character for those who have to conform themselves to the character of the Saviour ; but whether it might not also exercise an influence upon the mind, by which its spiritual perceptions would be clouded, and the view of the Saviour

more or less intercepted : as, if a mist should come over the landscape before us, it would be no time for the draughtsman to attempt a drawing of it. Yes, from first to last, it must be our anxious endeavour, as in this life, at the best, we see but through a glass darkly, that that glass be not further obscured and darkened by the mists which rise from “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye,” and from whatsoever is “not of the Father, but of the world.”

After what we have had before us of this our high, and holy, and heavenly calling, can we avoid asking ourselves, my brethren, what *progress* we have, each of us, made in it?—unless the *previous* question be to be put, whether to have the same mind forming in us, which was in Christ Jesus, has been our *object*. *Has* it been, my brethren? Let us put it to ourselves, whether—not so much to be as the great and the distinguished, as the affluent and the powerful, as those who are surrounded with the accommodations, and have at their command all the pleasures of life, as to be like Him who was *not* of this world; whether, to breathe his spirit, to cultivate his dispositions and tempers, to present in our measure the same character to the world, has been, and is, the great object of life with us.

Let me ask the young—the youngest, I would ask, as being no less concerned in the question than any others—whether they be trying to be like Him who, when he was of their age, did not think himself too *young* to be about his Heavenly Father’s business—to be like Him who, while he was the Son of God Most High, was “subject” as he was—and in being so, made the filial relation more sacred than ever—to his human parents? Are you, like him, growing in wisdom from above, dear young friends, as you grow in years—in that *grace* are you growing, by which you grow “in favour with God and man?”

Or is conscience accusing any, of an entire *unlikeness* to

the Saviour? Nay, it may be, that to purify themselves as he is pure, had never been so much as contemplated by them.

And are you content to *continue* in such a state? What! content to be without hope in Christ! For "every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself," do you not hear? "as *he* is pure."

Yet, let me not be misunderstood. Let not any, in the consciousness of such unlikeness, leave the church under the impression that it is only by their first becoming *like* the Saviour there is any hope for them from him; as if it were by purifying ourselves, as he is pure, we had to recommend ourselves to acceptance with God! No, my brethren, that is not the Gospel which you hear from us. It were no gospel at all, *that*. From *such* a gospel *none* could derive hope. Or it is the hope of dark ignorance, or of strong delusion. I attempted, when I last addressed you, to present the Gospel in all its abounding grace, as it has now been my attempt to present it in its exalted holiness. It is when the sinner, without a trace of resemblance to the Saviour, has, through faith in him, without anything to recommend him but what is in the Saviour himself,—it is when, in such a state, he has been through faith "accepted in him," that the resemblance to the Saviour commences. It is the *result* of his acceptance, not a *title* to it—the *effect* of his justification, not the *cause* of it. It is because he *has* been justified, he strives to conform himself to him, not, in order that he *may* be justified. "Because ye *are* sons," says the Apostle, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,"² to renew you after the image of his Son. "*Now* are we," says the Apostle in the text, "the sons of God," and *therefore* "purify ourselves as he is pure." It is the faith which is imputed to us for righteousness, which renders us capable, and that becomes in us the

² Gal. iv. 6.

principle of holiness. As it is the hand by which we apprehend Christ for justification, it is also the instrument of the new creation of us, after the image of Christ. And, just in proportion as it acquires strength, (as, to make the tree more productive, what is to nourish it is applied, not to the branches, but to the root,) it is as the root of faith in Christ grows and strengthens, that the life of conformity to him advances, and that we “purify ourselves as he is pure.”

Am I then addressing any, with whom this Divine work has yet to commence? But no reason is there,—seeing that you want nothing in yourself to recommend you, and that nothing of which you have been guilty will exclude you; seeing that through faith in *him*, by whom all the guilt has been expiated, and whatever is wanting for our salvation is supplied, “God justifies the *ungodly*”—no reason is there, but that you should this day be restored to the *favour* of God, and that this day the blessed work should commence of your restoration after the *image* of God.

And you, dear brethren, in whom this work of Heaven has not to *commence*,—ah! but let us look well to it,—and as we would have evidence in ourselves of its reality,—let us take good heed that it *advance*, that it be “as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day”—as you would glorify your Divine Master, let his image in you shine out yet more and more luminously and distinctly, as the image and reflection of himself.

As we would have more of heaven upon earth, and abound in the hope of heaven itself, is it not for us to be advancing every day and every hour, in that likeness to our Divine Saviour, in which so much of *both* heavens consists?

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God and heirs of eternal life, grant to us, we beseech thee, that

having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure, that when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made *like* unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom, where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.^a

^a Collect for Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.



SERMON VI.

THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD.

LUKE xiii. 6—9.

“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

“Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

“And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone *this year also*, till I shall dig about it, and dung it.

“And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down.”

As I have had before me the *holiness* of God, my brethren, in whose sight the stars are not pure, the heavens are not clean,—holiness which cannot behold iniquity—as, in the visions of the prophets, I have beheld him in the midst of the thousands and tens of thousands of angelic beings that surround his throne,—the throne before which is a sea of glass, like unto crystal—and have seemed to catch the echoes of the seraphic choirs as they sing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts!”—and have then thought upon the scenes which this earth presents before the eyes of his glory, the language which rises from this world lying in wickedness to mingle with those sounds of heaven, deeds of darkness which will not bear the light *below*, seen in

that light which no man can approach unto,—my whole soul has echoed to the Apostle, of a truth, God is “*long-suffering* to usward.”^a

It is this *long-suffering* of our gracious God which is presented to us in the parable which you have now heard, my brethren. The owner of the vineyard comes year after year “seeking fruit” upon the fig-tree, though year after year he had “found none.” And when at length he had determined upon cutting it down as a cumberer of the ground, at the intercession of the dresser of the vineyard, unfruitful and unprofitable as it is, it is spared *still*.

And do none of us recognise anything of their own history, in such a representation? Would there were now poured into the bosom of every one of us, that “light which maketh manifest,” even as in the day of judgment it will make manifest,—that we might know, every one of us, the “plague of his own heart,” and the amount of his provocations; were it only that we might know what has been the *long-suffering* of our God towards us!

For what such thought, for subduing, melting our stubborn nature, as that when we have been provoking God every day, He has been every day bearing with us; that when we have been wearying him with our iniquities, He has been *unwearied* in his mercy to us; that when we have sinned, it may be, with a high hand, given the reins to our lusts, seemed to say, Who is lord over us? we have not been *crushed*, my brethren; that the God against whom we have been sinning, has been all the time, “as a deaf man that heareth not, and as one that is dumb, that openeth not his mouth!” Is not this, *goodness*—well might the Apostle say, “This goodness of God leadeth to *repentance*.”^b This is the “hammer” which God uses, “to break the rock in pieces.” With what emotions the Apostle looked back

^a 2 Pet. iii. 9.

^b Rom. ii. 4.

himself upon those days, when he was “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord!”^c “Howbeit, I obtained mercy,” he says, “that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth *all long-suffering*.”^d It gave an edge to the zeal and labour of love of a convert of later times, which hoar hairs and growing infirmities could not abate, when, in Newton the Christian minister, he forgot not Newton the African blasphemer.

And which of us that knows himself, but will be ready to cry out *with* them,—is it not, indeed, the language of the whole church?—“Who is a God like unto thee,” that sparest, and passest by the transgression of those who have been so continually provoking thy wrath and indignation against them!

Let us pause awhile upon this astonishing long-suffering —(the long-suffering *itself* is the first thing in the parable to be considered by us)—so prominent in all God’s dealings with our fallen world! As when it “waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing.”^e Long did God bear with all flesh that had corrupted their way, and often did he warn them, before “the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”^f

It was not till “the iniquity of the Amorites” was “full,”^g that the sentence which had been pronounced upon them could be executed. For four hundred years, the performance of the promise which had been made to Abraham, to give their country to his posterity, was suspended, out of long-suffering to those, who had not filled up the measure of their iniquity.

Long did he “suffer the manners of his people in the wilderness;” “they dealt proudly, and hardened their necks,” as speaks Nehemiah in his confessions, “and hearkened not

^c Acts ix. 1.

^d 1 Tim. i. 16.

^e 1 Pet. iii. 20.

^f Gen. vii. 11.

^g Gen. xv. 16.

to thy commandments, and refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders which thou didst among them, but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain, to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not; yea, when they had made them a molten calf," continues the holy man, penetrated with the mercy,—“when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God, which brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; yet thou, in thy manifold mercies, *forsookest them not in the wilderness.*”^h

Long was he sending to Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as Jeremiah so pathetically complains, all his servants the prophets, “rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers:”ⁱ and incorrigibly determined were they “not to incline their ear and hearken.”—“I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; I have called unto them, but they have not answered,”—before he would “bring upon Judah, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the evil which he had pronounced against them.”^j

Nor is it only that he forbears so long to *bring* the evil—so long spares those who are threatened with it,—but what is it but long-suffering that dictates the very *threatenings*? God threatens, that he may not *inflict* what he threatens. He “speaks once, yea, twice,” that he may not *strike*. He hews his sinful people by his *prophets*, as he speaks, that he may *not* hew them with his *judgments*. He *shows* the rod, before he *uses* it. If he thunders, it is that he may not launch the thunder-bolt. If at times, as the prophet speaks, he

^h Neh. ix. 16—19.

ⁱ Jer. xxxv. 15.

^j Jer. xxxv. 17.

“roars as a lion,”^k it is that he may not tear in pieces as a lion. According to that explanation which we have of the Divine threatenings, in the thirty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah, (to refer to no other passage) where, when the prophet had been directed to take the roll, and write therein all the words which the Lord had spoken against Judah and against Jerusalem,—“It may be,” it is added, “the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive,”—that the *result* of the threatening may be, “that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.”^l

And when he can withhold his hand no longer, in beginning to execute “his strange work,” it is with *lesser* chastisements continually, he begins. He does not *yet* “suffer his *whole* displeasure to arise.” He chastises with whips, before he scourges with scorpions. *Lighter* corrections are resorted to, *before* “a *worse* thing happen” to a man. There are droppings from the skirts of the thunder-cloud, before “wrath is poured out to the uttermost.”

With what a touching view we are presented of this God’s slowness to anger,—of his *unwillingness* to execute judgment, even when the provocation has arrived at its height, and sin is ripe for judgment,—in Ezekiel’s vision of the glory of the Lord departing from Jerusalem! First, it removes from where it was over the cherubim, to the *threshold* of the temple, and there lingers, as if it would fain return. Presently, it is seen hovering over the cherubim again, as if, upon being solicited, it would descend and resume its former station. And before it takes its final departure, it lingers upon the mountain *beyond* the temple,^m as if God had been saying,—and was he *not* saying it,—“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?”ⁿ Even when he “whets his glittering sword,”—

^k Hos. xi. 10.

^m Ezek. x. 4, 18, and xi. 23.

^l Jer. xxxvi. 3.

ⁿ Hosea xi. 8.

to put it back into the scabbard, is what the God of all mercy would desire, and not to use it.

And to what *end* does He thus bear with us? And it is this, which, in the opening of the parable, I would propose that we should consider, secondly, unless it has appeared sufficiently in what has been said *already*. But yet let it be *well* observed and considered, to what end, with what object in view, God thus bears with us. "Lord, let it alone this year also." Why? "That I may dig about it, and dung it." He not only forbears to cut us off in our sins, but, meanwhile, his Spirit strives with us. The interval of forbearance he employs as an interval of *further* grace. "Behold! He stands at the door," as he speaks himself, "He stands at the door," all the time, "and *knocks*."^o Hence those visitations of sickness, which remove the veil from death and eternity, to awaken the sleeping conscience; those escapes from imminent dangers, great deliverances, which bespeak to him that runs, the protection of an unseen hand, to touch the unthinking heart; those severings of tender ties, to sever the earth-bound affections from their clinging, and fix them upon objects that fade not away.

Or, he varies his method—makes the sun to shine upon our tabernacle, surrounds us with plenty, or blesses us with a blooming family, disposes the hearts of others to love and cherish us, sends us health and strength, gives us a profusion richly to enjoy, to carry up our hearts to the Author and Giver of all our blessings.

And then, he makes us to "hear a word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it."^p He approaches us in his Gospel, presents to us mercies of which his outward ones are only faintest shadows, a love which passeth knowledge, a happiness which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

^o Rev. iii. 20.

^p Isa. xxx. 21.

Yes, my brethren, for all the holiness of God and his abhorrence of sin, and our repeated provocations, he not only bears with us under them, but thus pursues us in our wanderings, stretches out his hand all the day long to the disobedient and rebellious, if so be he may recover them, if by any means he may gain some.

For the Dresser of the vineyard is still *pleading*—this is a third particular to be considered by us, *explanatory* of the continued long-suffering—that the Dresser of the vineyard is still pleading, “Lord, let it alone.”

Is the wrath of God breaking out against sin? Is he saying, as of old, “Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, that I may consume them?” As Moses then “*besought* the Lord his God,” and “the Lord *repented* of the evil which he had thought to do unto his people,”⁹ He, of whom Moses was the *figure*, our *true* “Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,” pleads for us, with a plea to which the intercession of Moses owed all its efficacy, as having suffered *for* us the wrath from which he would protect us; appears in the presence of God as “the Lamb that was *slain*” for us;—He who is our “Advocate with the Father,” is also “the propitiation for our sins;”^r with the blood with which he “purged our sins” “makes intercession for us.”

True, wheresoever sin is, it cannot be but that the wrath of God should wax hot against it. The privileges of *angels*, a place in *heaven*, could be no protection from the wrath of God against *sin*: and if he spared not the angels that sinned, what have *others* to expect! In *ourselves* we are no less the objects of Divine wrath, and of the righteous denunciations against sin, than were the fallen angels. The difference between them and us is, that *we* have an all-prevailing Intercessor, while they have none; or we should

⁹ Exodus xxxii. 10, 11, 14.

^r 1 John ii. 1, 2.

be at this moment in the same “everlasting chains, under darkness,” in which they are; “reserved unto” the same “judgment of the great day,”^s to which sin had subjected us *alike*. The difference between us is, that the Son of God took not the nature of *angels* upon him, but *did* take upon him *ours*. In *our* case, in the unfathomable depths of his love to us, he interposed between the sentence and the execution. While, for the fallen angels there is no appeal from the holy law that condemns them, for fallen *man*, (for can we ever *weary* of hearing it?) that for fallen *man* God found a ransom. He has *bought* us out of the hands into which we had *sold* ourselves. God spared not his own Son, that *we* might be spared :—with a *price* we have been bought, in consideration of which, the holy God, for all his abominating of sin, and consistently with his holy denunciations against it, spares,—and how much more than *s pares*,—the sinner.

And shall all be in vain ?

We have now had three particulars before us, presented to us in the parable—the barren fig-tree so long spared ; to what *end* it was spared ; and *how*, by what *means* it was spared : in other words,—the long-suffering of God, extended as it is so wonderfully to those who had sinned against him, as *we* had done ; with what *view* it is extended to us ; and how, under the righteous government of a holy God, it *can* be so extended to us.

And shall all, I say, be in vain ? For there is another particular for our consideration yet,—“If it bear fruit, well.” The long-suffering will *not* have been in vain *then* : “but if *not*, then after that, thou shalt cut it down.”

Am I addressing an individual resembling the barren fig-tree ? You have heard how the Divine Intercessor is pleading *for* you. But I seem also to hear him pleading

^s Jude 6.

THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD.

with you, as though he had said, Cumberer of the ground, God has now let thee alone, forborne to cut thee down, *how long?* And has forbearance been the *only* mercy? And when he looks for grapes, shall he still find *wild* grapes? Even Saul, when David spared him, and rewarded his evil with good, even Saul relented and wept.^t

What an aggravation it is of sin, my brethren, what a deep dye of malignity it gives it, how exceeding sinful, how *base* it appears, as committed in the face of such goodness, in resistance to such appeals!

And what is more, this God's slowness to anger is interpreted as *indifference to sin*. And yet, rather than that the sinner should be at once cut down, God subjects himself to such an imputation upon his holiness. His forbearance is interpreted, as if sin were less hateful to him, as if it might be committed with impunity. As in that complaint in the fiftieth psalm,—“Thou hast done these things: when thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst to him; thou hast been partaker with the adulterers: thou satest and spakest against thy brother,—and I kept silence.” What was the consequence? “Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one *as thyself*,”^u alike insensible to the atrociousness of sin. “Tush, thou God *carest* not for it.”^v And so it comes, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed *speedily*, therefore is the heart of the sons of men fully set in them to do evil.”^w

Alas! and this is it; this which should melt us into repentance and sorrow for sin—it is this, God's slowness to execute judgment, that encourages men to *put off* their repentance! Why should not I indulge in the pleasures to which my age invites me? says the young man. Why should not I take advantage of my best days, snatch the

^t 1 Sam. xxiv. 16.

^u Psa. x. 14.

^v Psa. l. 18, 20, 21.

^w Eccles. viii. 11.

opportunity to promote the interests of my family, and advance myself in life? says he, with whom to advance in the *world* is the first object. Why should not I, while I can enjoy myself, “eat, drink, and be merry?” says the sensualist; for I shall have time enough to prepare for *another* world, when I shall have had my glut of *this*. And so, *because* God is long-suffering, because He forbears to summon sinners to their account in the heat and steam of their sins, instead of being overcome by the mercy, they hold on in their sinful course, in the hope of impunity—for I shall have time enough to make my peace with God *hereafter*!

Is it not a provocation—What! the flower of life—the vigour of the understanding, the glow of the affections, the elasticity of the spirits,—youth, health, and strength,—these you would spend upon the *world*, and in the indulgence of the flesh! But you calculate upon having the joys of heaven, as well as the pleasures of sin: for that after the enjoyment of your sinful pleasures, you will have time *yet* to make your peace with God!

Is there not, in an abuse of the Divine forbearance like this, what would seem to cry for the *instant* execution of the sentence, *Cut down* the cumberer of the ground?

Ah! try not this patience—(if I should be addressing an individual who is thus presuming upon it)—as you have any concern for what becomes of you for ever—try not this patience another hour. For who can tell, for all that God is so slow to anger to-day, but that you may bring upon yourself swift destruction to-morrow? Long-suffering as God *is*, his long-suffering has its limit. His Spirit will not *always* strive with man. There is a knock of the Saviour at the heart, which will be the *last* knock. “Because of the evil of their doings, He could bear *no longer*,”—do not we read?^x It is the day of grace yet, but “the night cometh.”

^x Jer. xlv. 22.

As yet the door is open ; but who knows how soon it may be shut ? As yet the tree is standing ; but if it still bear no fruit, the sentence is already pronounced upon it, “ Cut it down.”

And what a sign that the sentence is near to be executed, that the time of patience is fast expiring, when, instead of answering its purpose of leading to repentance, it makes a man the bolder in sin !

And think, my brethren, what will such patience, when at length exhausted, turn to ! If there be any, upon whom the woes of Bethsaida, the judgment of Capernaum, will fall with accumulated weight ; if there be any, for whom it will be “ less tolerable in the day of judgment, than for Sodom and Gomorrah,” will it not be for those to whom God had shown himself, more than to others, long-suffering, slow to anger, of great kindness, and repenting him continually of the evil which their sins provoked,—and *they* repented not ? Of whom is it, if not of such, that he says, “ Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you ?”^y

And yet, while there is yet *time*, who can have greater encouragement to *return* ? For who can more certainly assure themselves of being accepted, if they do ? If God bore with you as he did, while you “ set at nought his counsel, and would none of his reproof,” will there be a period to the mercy, when you would “ kick against the pricks” no longer ? If He still spared you, when you were the servant of *sin*, will He “ shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure,” when you would take his *own* yoke upon you ? If, with a view

^y Prov. i. 24—27.

to its coming into *bearing*, He left the *barren* tree standing, will He cut it down when He sees a promise of *fruit*?

Let there be such promise, let there be a relenting, let there be a yielding to the Spirit who is so graciously striving with you; and in the place of barren fig-trees, of cumberers of the ground, we may hope to see "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," springing up. For the grace to which you are yielding yourself is drawing you to the Saviour, drawing you, that you may be found in *Him*, "accepted" in him; that, instead of there being the sentence hanging over you, "Cut him down," there may be "no condemnation" for you, being "in Christ Jesus." *Then*, no longer will the owner of the vineyard come seeking fruit, and finding none: as, when you were in the flesh, the motions of sin in your members did bring forth "fruit unto death;"^z you shall as surely, being in Christ,—even as the branches of the vine bear the fruit of the vine,—you shall have your "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life:"^a you shall have blessed proof in *yourself* that "the *long-suffering* of God is *salvation*."^b

My brethren, who have already found it so, upon whom this long-suffering has not waited in vain; *you* also would I here entreat, to suffer the word of exhortation. "If it bear fruit, *well*:" but if it bear *much* fruit, better. And "every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it," do not we read? "that it may bear *more* fruit." For what reason, indeed, is the Christian, from the time when he has become one, left longer in the world, but that he may bear more fruit in it? For "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."^c "Stir up, then, O Lord, we beseech thee, the wills of thy faithful people, that they may plenteously bring forth the fruit" of the vineyard!

And can we be at a loss for what will *prevail* with you, my

^z Rom. vii. 5.

^a Rom. vi. 22.

^b 2 Pet. iii. 15.

^c John xv. 8.

brethren, while we are engaged as we are to-day? What would have become of me, what had been my doom and portion for ever,—have none of us reason to say it?—if God had not borne with me to the last!—and is there no demand upon me to live to the glory of that God, whom I so long lived only to dishonour; and who, *while* I so awfully dishonoured him, still waited to be gracious to me?

Or, need I refer you so far back? Were it not enough, to bid you think of the forbearance towards you in your state of *grace*—for sins against greater *light*, and yet *greater* love—for sins still sprouting from the root of self and pride, for sins of unsubdued temper, for sins into which the fear of man betrayed you, or the love of the praise of man; for sins of omission and neglect, for the sins of the thoughts and imaginations of the heart, for infirm purposes, broken resolutions, and, it may be, for yet worse!—And God yet owns you as his children; has not broken you off from the tree of life, as branches that disfigure it; has not been extreme to mark what you have done amiss!—and will you own another object in life, but to live to the glory of the God who has been so gracious to you?

Ah! and think of those, and some perhaps well-known to you, who were *not* spared; with whom you were walking *together*, it may have been, upon the edge of the precipice, when *they* fell over;—*companions* in sinful ways, who, before they had discovered any trace of a change having passed upon them, were snatched to their account—whilst *you* were not only spared, but blest, moreover, with means and opportunities of grace; pursued, as the lost sheep by the shepherd,—till thou hadst fetched them home, blessed Lord! to thy flock. And will you own another object in life, I say, but to live to the glory of the God who so loved you? When he looks for a return from his fig-tree, shall he not find “much fruit?”

And not a few of us have no longer the *first-fruits* of life to offer. Oh! that they who *have, may* offer them! But these, alas! some of us may have disposed of in another way. Will they not then crowd into what little span may remain to them, all that they *can* crowd into it, whereby the God, so long forgotten, may be glorified by them? After the loss of so much of the day, is it not for the labourers in the vineyard to make up for the lost time, in the *evening* which has been so graciously extended to them? If it be for *any* to “show all diligence,” and to be “fruitful in every good work,” is it not for those who had been for so many hours of the day *idle*?

I would only add, that if one kind of fruit, more than another, would seem to be demanded of us, by the Divine long-suffering towards us—and one it is for which, in the varying intercourse of life, and in the midst of our common infirmities, there is perpetual occasion—it is that of a *like* long-suffering, on our part, from one to another. Has God borne with so much evil from *us*—have we, for years, it may be, *existed* upon his long-suffering; and is it for *us* to be impatient of every infirmity, to be incapable of bearing with anything of that in others, with so *much* of which God has borne in *us*? After having been forgiven the ten thousand talents, shall we take our fellow-servant by the throat for an hundred pence? If there be a grace, by which those who have been dealt by, as *we* have been, may well be expected to be distinguished, is it not that of patience, forbearance, long-suffering?

Let the fig-tree make *such* a return for the patience and culture bestowed upon it, and “well”—*indeed!*—For all that is past,—in a little while, it will be “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”^d The Lord grant, that what time we may be yet left standing

in the vineyard, may be spent very differently by us, than were the three years referred to in the parable; that when he comes seeking fruit, he may find *much*, and that if we be about to be removed, any of us, from our place in his vineyard upon earth, it may be,—not as if the sentence were pronounced, “Cut down the cumberer of the ground,” but that we may be as those to whom, “being *neither barren nor unfruitful*,” “an entrance shall be ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!”^e

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit which thou dost look for from those who are planted in thy vineyard, and more and more of such fruit, to thy praise and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

^e 2 Pet. i. 8, 11.



SERMON VII.

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxiii. 37, 38.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

“Behold! your house is left unto you desolate.”

THERE are two things which present themselves to us, throughout the Scriptures, in the contrast of light and darkness: the love of God,—and the resistance—the desperate resistance which there is to it, on the part of man.

What an affecting exhibition we have of the one and of the other, in the passage before us! The words are too familiar to require any reference to the context in which they stand.

Let us consider, then,—First, the *love* which expresses itself, as well in the unwearied repetition of the overtures it makes, “How *often* would I have gathered thy children!” as in the Saviour’s comparison of himself, as he makes them, to the “hen gathering her chickens under her wings:”—Secondly, the melancholy *resistance* to all such overtures: “And ye would not:”—and Thirdly, the *consequences*: “Behold! your house is left unto you desolate.”

First, then, we are to consider the unwearied repetition

of his solicitations—"How *often* would I have gathered thy children!"

When Peter asked the question, "How oft shall my brother trespass against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?"—the Saviour's answer was dictated by his own manner of acting, when he said, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven."^a

How *often* the Saviour would have gathered his people, would we know? "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day," (as we read in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah,) "I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them."^b For it was no other than He who was then speaking to them in a human form, and weeping over them with human tears, who, before he took our nature upon him, had spoken so often to their fathers. As in the tenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, it was "*Christ*," says the Apostle, their fathers "tempted" in the wilderness.^c

How often he would have gathered the revolted and idolatrous ten tribes,—how many of his prophets were sent to them,—before Shalmaneser received the commission to carry Israel away captive!

How often he would have gathered the remnant of irreclaimable Judah,—before "the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation was lifted up against them," in Nebuchadnezzar!

"I have stretched out my hands *all the day long*," might he not well say? "to a disobedient and gainsaying people."^d

And was it less so, when "the Word was made flesh,"—was he less unwearied, as *Man*, in his attempts to gather "the lost sheep of the house of Israel?"

^a Matt. xviii. 21, 22.

^b Jer. vii. 25.

^c 1 Cor. x. 9.

^d Rom. x. 21.

Or, since he *returned* to the glory which he had with the Father, has there been a change? A change! What! when his words are, from where he now is, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock!"^e

And as his love is expressed by the continual repetition of his solicitations, it is expressed further, (we were to proceed to consider,) by his comparison of himself, as he makes them, to the "hen gathering her chickens under her wings."

It is thus—The Creator reflects himself, more or less, in his creatures. He stamps his own image, more or less legibly, upon the works of his hands. In the *visible* things which he has made,—in the glass of his creation,—He gives us to see the *invisible* things of his Godhead. In the instinct of the mother-bird, in its tenderness for its young, he would have us to see something of his own, of his *more* than maternal tenderness for *ourselves*. As in the Psalm, "He that planted the ear, shall he not *hear*; and he that formed the eye, shall he not see?"^f—shall not he see and hear, *himself*, who made the human organs of sight and hearing?—in like manner, he would have us gather from his having implanted in the *bird* such yearnings for its young, what must be "the bowels of mercies" in the Creator himself! He would prepare us, even by what we observe in the *natural* world, for hearing from the Apostle, that "God is love!"^g

But neither are we left to make the inference for *ourselves*. In what you see in the mother-bird, says the Saviour in so many words, you have some faint expression of what has been in *my* heart towards *you*.

Was it not by a like touching similitude, he expressed his solicitude for his people in earlier times? When he had brought them out of Egypt, and was training them in

^e Rev. iii. 20.

^f Psa. xciv. 9.

^g 1 John iv. 8.

the wilderness, it was as the eagle,—was it not?—as the eagle practises her young to fly, flutters over them, bears them aloft upon her own wings, he described himself as training them?^h

And yet we shall still fall short of what the comparison is intended to convey to us of the love and solicitude of the Saviour, unless we follow it out into some particulars. Nor need we be apprehensive, after the choice of such a comparison by *himself*, of anything of undue homeliness and familiarity in doing so.

Is the hen, at the approach of danger, in a state of restless agitation, till the brood be safe under her? And is the *Saviour* unconcerned—is he unconcerned for *their* danger—(while, alas! even as the chickens, they are so often insensible to it themselves,) to whom his language is, “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”ⁱ Would he leave those without a place of safety, who, if they will run into it, have “the eternal God for their refuge, and underneath them the everlasting arms?”^j

Is the hen occupied the day long in providing wherewith to feed her young, and as often as she lights upon any crumbs or grains of corn, impatient till the chickens gather them up? And is He indifferent to what *we* require for our sustenance—not to speak of his provision for our *temporal* wants,—from whom we hear, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of *this* bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world?”^k

Once more. Does the hen, if any of the chickens droop, nurse and cherish them so tenderly? And does He do nothing like it, whom we hear, as he uses another similitude, “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which

^h Deut. xxxii. 11.

ⁱ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

^j Deut. xxxiii. 27.

^k John vi. 51.

was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick?"^l Or, as we hear him in those words yet more familiar to us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you?"^m

Were it, then, beyond the truth to say it,—whether we regard the unwearied repetition of the solicitations, or the similitude under which he presents himself, as he makes them,—that a love and solicitude is expressed, such as has no parallel?

We are now prepared for the second division of our subject. And yet, *prepared* for it, shall I say? What! prepared for such *resistance* on the part of those, towards whom all this love and tenderness is expressed—prepared to hear, "and ye would not!"—"How often *I* would," it is; "and *ye,*" as often, "would *not!*"

It was no *new* complaint. We meet with the same in the thirtieth chapter of Isaiah, (at the fifteenth verse,) "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest ye shall be saved: in quietness and confidence shall be your strength—and ye would not!"

Or, see the contrast, as it is in the eighty-first Psalm,—the same affecting contrast between the Divine love, and the resistance which it meets with! "O that my people had hearkened unto me, that Israel had walked in my ways!"ⁿ Was *desire* for their salvation wanting?—He had said before, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it—But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me."^o

We heard but now, from the seventh chapter of Jeremiah, "Since the day when your fathers came out of Egypt, unto

^l Ezek. xxxiv. 16.

^m Matt. xi. 28.

ⁿ Psalm lxxxii. 13.

^o Psalm lxxxii. 10, 11.

this day, I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them"—And what impression was made? "They hearkened not unto me," the prophet continues, "nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck."^p

In the seventh chapter of Zechariah, the language describing their resistance is yet stronger: "They pulled away the shoulder, stopped their ears; they made their hearts as an adamant stone."^q

In the first chapter of the book of Proverbs, the same dark contrast is presented—God, unwearied in his sollicitations—those to whom they are made, as determined in their resistance to them. "I called—ye refused. I stretched out my hand—no man regarded. Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof!"^r

But neither is this *all* that the Saviour complains of. It was not only that he was "despised and rejected of men:"—he charges Jerusalem with having "killed his prophets, and stoned those that were sent" by him to her. No—not only was the *embassy* resisted and rejected: there was no manner of violence, nor of indignity, to which the *ambassadors* were not subjected. There was a departure from all known usage, in *this* instance. The character of an ambassador is regarded as sacred—his person as inviolable. To *Christ's* ambassadors the privilege and protection, accorded to others, were denied!—Had we to wait to hear from the Apostle, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God?"^s

Nor are we to forget from what *quarter* it is that this enmity of the carnal mind breaks out. "Yea, even mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me!"^t "O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem!*" It was no other than Jerusalem—Jerusalem, for

^p Jer. vii. 26. ^q Zech. vii. 11, 12. ^r Prov. i. 24, 25.

^s Rom. viii. 7. ^t Psalm xli. 9.

whom it was to have been as a prophet herself, the fountain of truth, the centre of pure and undefiled religion, the light of the world,—she becomes the murderer of the messengers, sheds the blood of the prophets of the Lord!

Well might Stephen sum up as he does, his review of the Israelitish history: “Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them who showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom” (he adds,) when he appeared *himself*, “ye have been now the betrayers and murderers!”^u

Was it not as if, (to pursue the similitude,) as if, upon the alarm being given by the mother-bird of the approach of danger, her young, while her wings were spread out to defend them,—as though they had been a brood of *monsters* rather than her own—were seen making a violent assault upon her; some darting at her eyes, others thrusting their beaks into her breast,—till she dropped lifeless from the injuries of those whom, at any hazard to *herself*, she would have *protected* from all injury?

And was it without reason the Apostle said it,—that “the carnal mind is enmity against God?”

Is it any wonder, then, that we should hear, *at the last*, even from Him who was stretching out his hands, and spreading out his wings *all the day long*,—that we should *at last* hear from him, (what we were to consider thirdly,) “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate?”

“*Your* house,” emphatically:—as in the thirty-second chapter of Exodus, “Go, get thee down,” said the Lord to Moses, “Thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:”^v—*Thy* people—no longer *mine*:—so here, *Your* house—*mine* no longer. It is

^u Acts vii. 51, 52.

^v Exod. xxxii. 7. .

“left unto you *desolate*.” They had rejected the *Lord*. The Lord is now disowning and rejecting *them*.

A like denunciation follows, in the chapter of the book of Proverbs that was just now referred to. First—“*I called ;*” “*I stretched out my hand.*” Next—“*ye refused :*” “*no man regarded.*” “*They set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof.*” Then comes, “*I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh, as desolation.*”

So in the chapter of Zechariah that has been referred to. First, prophets after prophets are sent. Next, they “pull away the shoulder, stop their ears, make their hearts as an adamant stone.” Then follows, “Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as *he* cried, and *they* would not hear ; so *they* cried, and *I* would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts : But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not : thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through, nor returned ; for they laid the pleasant land desolate !”^w

And so, for a like “overspreading of abominations,” came the *second* desolation. The *second* time their “house was left unto them *desolate*.” And to this hour is Jerusalem the monument of that great wrath, as it is to continue to be, till “that which is determined shall have been poured upon the desolate !”^x

Not that the sentence was suspended, till the Roman armies encamped about Jerusalem. No sooner had the Saviour pronounced it, than, as we read at the beginning of the next chapter, “He went out, and departed from the temple.”^y In the twelfth chapter of Saint John’s gospel, he had given *intimation* of his being about to do so, when, after having said to them, “Yet a little

^w Zech. vii. 12—14.

^x Dan. ix. 27.

^y Matt. xxiv. 1.

while is the light with you ; he *departed*," it is added, "and did *hide himself* from them."z And what was the temple but *desolate* from that hour !

And what was true of the temple, is it less so of the *individual* ? Has Christ *departed* ? What the earth would become, were the sun blotted out of the heavens,—such is the *soul*, from which *Christ* has departed. Let the *outward* sunshine and prosperity be what it may, it is the region of the shadow of death *within* : though without, it were "as the garden of Eden," it is within, "a desolate wilderness."

Ah ! and when the *outward* scene, also, shall have been *broken up*—when those objects of sense, by means of which "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God," makes shift, for the present, to divert itself from *itself*, and put away from it the things unseen and to come,—when all the objects of present interest and occupation shall have been removed, and such a mind, without any refuge from without, shall be turned naked upon *itself*, to be the prey of its sensual and depraved self,—what will the desolation *then* be ! What will it be, when the complaint of the Saviour will find an echo, as from a thousand voices, in *awakened conscience*, How often *Thou* wouldest, and *I* would not ! What will be the desolation—But why should I go on ? Need there anything be added to the hell *within* !

And is this the state which awaits, I was going to say, any whom I am addressing ? But God forbid ! And yet, as surely as any go on *resisting* all the grace of the Saviour, it does await them—a state, in which the *past* will present only mercies rejected ! opportunities lost for ever ! and the *future*, darkness without a gleam of light !—while unavailing regret, corroding self-reproach, the anguish of remorse, will be of itself a "worm that dieth not," and a "fire unquenchable !"

* John xii. 35, 36.

And to think that when it is from such a state the Saviour is come to deliver us, is beseeching his ruined creatures to escape, he should speak to the greater part of us, as to the wind! Has it been so with any whom I am addressing?—But I seem to hear from one and from another, that it shall be no longer so.—

Am I addressing any who, in the review of the past, look back upon mis-spent sabbaths, heartless prayer, a neglected Bible, admonitions neglected, *parental* admonitions neglected, admonitions from *this place* neglected, admonitions of *conscience* neglected, who remember knocks after knocks at the door, which yet they would not open?—That the condition of such is most awful, is not to be denied;—beyond description, awful it is! And yet, blessed, blessed be He who is spreading out his wings all the day long! it is not *hopeless!*

Often as, when the Saviour would have gathered you under those wings, you would not *come* under them, He would *still* gather you under them—*this day* he will, if *you* will. For no other reason did he ever reject a human being, but because that human being “would not *come* to him, that he might have life.”^a No, to the last, it is not the Saviour that rejects the sinner, but the sinner that rejects the Saviour! Let the *sinner* say it,—be it when it may,—I *will*: it is not from the *Saviour* he will hear, I will *not*: try *this day*, if you will.—For while I speak, while you hear his Word,—as it was by his prophets and those who were sent by him he would have gathered his people of old—he is, while you are hearing his gracious Word, as the hen that would “gather her chickens under her wings.”

Is it because they have so far *wandered* from him, that any fear a repulse? But who are they but *wanderers*, who are to be *brought back*? For has he not, blessed be his

^a John v. 40.

name! taken all the obstacles out of the way of their being *received* back? Who are they that are to be “gathered,” but such as had been scattered? To whom is it he is calling to come under his wings, but to those who had *gone* from under them? Come to him, be it from what distance it may, *in no wise* will he cast you out.!

And think, think what it will be to you, to be under those wings! Was the Saviour thinking of the Psalm, when he used the comparison, (it would seem he was,)—of the Psalm, in which his *perfect security* is described, “who dwells under the shadow of the Almighty,” whom he “covers with his feathers,” who is safe “under his wings?”^b

For what it *is* to be under the Saviour’s wing, need we go beyond what has been suggested by the comparison itself? And yet,—expressive as is the comparison,—what is the hen to the chickens, compared to what is the Saviour to those over whom *his* wing is spread!

The mother-bird, with all her solicitude, may yet *lose* her young. The hawk or the kite may snatch them from her, or some other evil may happen to them, from which she cannot protect them. Not so with those who are under the wing of the Saviour! “Of them which thou gavest me,” does he not say? “I have lost *none*.^c They shall never perish: none shall pluck them out of my hand.”^d

There is a time when the hen cares no longer for her chickens: they are no more to her, after a certain time, than any others. But the *Saviour*—“Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, who are borne by me from the belly, and carried from the womb: Even to your old age I am He: and to hoar hairs I will carry you.”^e The Saviour—“having

^b Psa. xci. 1, 4.
John x. 28.

^c John xviii. 9.
^e Isa. xlvi. 3, 4.

loved his own that are in the world, loveth them *unto the end!*"^f

And shall he then call to any of us, unheeded, to come under his wings? And while I speak, (as I said,) he is calling to you to come under them; for even what is the cry of the hen to the chickens, is *his Word*, (let it be repeated,) to those whom *He* would gather.

And yet, unheeded most certainly will he be,—such the resistance of that “carnal mind, which is enmity against God,”—unless,—unless he speak to the heart, as well as to the ear. For while it is by his Word he gathers his people, we learn, also, (do we not?)—from the utter inefficacy of all the reiterated appeals referred to,—that the Word falls to the ground, and leaves no impression behind it, unless the Lord himself open the *heart* to attend to and receive his Word;—that it is with his Word, as “the sword of his Spirit,” he makes the *effectual* appeal.

So that while it so much concerns us to take heed to the Word, it concerns us *no less* to be in prayer for the heart-opening Spirit, for that Spirit, through which the Word becomes “as fire, and as the hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces.”^g

If it be so, brethren in the Lord! you over whom the Saviour,—instead of lamenting that when he would have gathered you, you *would not*,—is rejoicing that you *would*, that you *have* been gathered by him:—if such be the resistance of the natural heart to all the appeals of God to it, what reason you have,—need I say it?—to be thankful for that grace, through which, in *your* case, the resistance has been *overcome*; through which the heart of stone has become a heart of flesh; through which you have responded to the calls, and are now cherished under the wings of your Divine Redeemer, hoping ere long, to pass from under his pro-

tecting wing, to where there will be no evil from which to be protected, to “the fulness of joy in his presence, and the pleasures for evermore at his right hand!”

To others, again and again would I say it, (for when would He, whose servants we are, have us to cease?) once more is the Saviour presenting himself to you, as the “hen” that “would gather her chickens under her wings.”

And shall it be, that in the day of his gathering together of all his people to him, he shall have to say of you, that when he would have gathered *you* in among them, you would not; that you will have to take the consequences of a neglected Gospel, of a rejected Saviour, while others are entering into that “fulness of joy in his presence, and the pleasures for evermore at his right hand?”—But shall he have to say of you *this day*, that you would not?

I would only add, that if there be one thing which is, more than another, characteristic of those who have not been the objects of such solicitude, in vain, it is the expression of a *like* solicitude, on their part, for those who are perishing, as they were. For what is all true Christianity, but the reflection of the Divine character in our own—the reflection, in the relations in which we stand *one to another*, of that love of God in Christ Jesus, of which we are the objects *ourselves!*



SERMON VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PROSPECT.

REVELATION vii. 9, 10, 13—17.

“ After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands :

“ And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

“ And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they ?

“ And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“ Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple ; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

“ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

“ For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

If one who had been long struggling with hardship and poverty, were suddenly to hear (and such things have happened—) that he was discovered to be the heir of a great property, and might expect, within a few years, to come into possession of a magnificent mansion and large estates—poverty, in the interval, would sit light upon

him, in the prospect of such an entire change in his condition.

It was when the Apostle John was in banishment, (as we read in the first chapter of this book,) "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ,"^a that, for some solace to him in his forlorn state, he saw what was presented to him in this transporting vision.

But it was for the consolation of the church at large, in her time of trial, that such a description of what awaits her was designed. She is, at present, as a ship at sea; the winds, at times, it may be, blowing a hurricane, and the waves running mountains high; but the harbour,—where she will be beyond the reach of waves and storms,—is in sight! It is the design, indeed, of the whole book of Revelation,—from where, at the first opening of it, Christ is seen as already "coming with clouds,"^b to the closing description of the glory of the new Jerusalem,—it is the design of the whole prophecy to sustain and encourage the afflicted people of God, in the prospect of the "rest which remaineth" for them.

The portion before us may refer, indeed, in the first instance, to an earlier period of the history of the church: we cannot be mistaken, however, in the application of it, in its highest and fullest import, to "the rest" which, after any such period of introductory repose and prosperity, will still "remain for the people of God." We are prepared for such a *progressive* fulfilment, by the character of prophecy in general, which is so much "as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."^c So far from being *exhausted* by the event which is immediately contemplated, or by a succession of such events, the fulfilment, in so many instances, is still inadequate and incomplete, till it shall have been fulfilled in the kingdom of glory.

^a Rev. i. 9.

^b Rev. i. 7.

^c Prov. iv. 18.

Let us, then, consider these "exceeding great and precious promises," as the *everlasting* rest and blessedness of the church are the subject of them. For while the husbandman, who has ploughed and sown in hope, is gladdened at the sight of the springing blade and swelling ear, he still looks to the golden harvest itself, for the reward of his labours.

The vision presents itself under the two-fold aspect,—First, of the deliverance of the church from the evils to which it is at present subject; "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,"—and, Secondly, of its enjoyment of all positive blessedness; "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and shall serve him day and night in his temple, and the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall dwell among them, and shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters."

What is first, then, to be considered by us is the promise that "they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more."—that there shall be no longer (for nothing less, plainly, is signified,)—that there shall be no longer any sense of *want*. And when we think how much of human suffering arises from this cause, from the various privations to which we are at present subject, (though we should not take *literal destitution* into account,) it will be of itself a change in our condition, for which to bless and praise God for evermore, when *want*, of any kind, will be unknown. Least of all, will the hunger and thirst, of which the enjoyment of more of communion with God is the object,—those "groanings which cannot be uttered," the heart-cries of such as have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," but who would more than *taste* of his graciousness,—least of all will *such* hunger and thirst remain unsatisfied!

And if nothing will be known more, of want or privation, much less will there be any infliction of *positive* evil. "The sun shall not light on them, nor any heat." For I scarce need say that the sun, as it is in those climates, is used in Scripture to represent every variety of "fiery trial," all the "fiery darts" with which we are assailed; as "a shadow from the heat" signifies *protection* from such trials, or the alleviation of them. As, in the interpretation of the parable of the sower, for example, the "tribulation or persecution which ariseth because of the word,"^d answers to the scorching heat of the sun in the parable itself. So that what is meant is, that the church shall be beyond the reach of all the injuries, and of the calamities of every kind, to which she is at present subject—that it shall then be to be asked by her, as by the Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea, "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" Shall the sun no more light on us, nor any heat?—We shall be no longer under the sentence, "In the sweat of thy face, thou shalt eat bread."^e There will be no more of languishing upon beds of sickness, no more toilsome days, nor wearisome nights: no more occasion will be given, either by exhaustion of body, or distress of mind, for any such complaint as that "my moisture is turned into the drought of summer!"^f

Nay, but is it not added, that "God will wipe away all tears from our eyes?" For what is there not to be understood by such a promise as *this*? You, who know what a blank may be made, in one hour,—who know what it is, to hang over the last gasp, to watch the last struggle of expiring nature, in one who was as your own soul to you—what it is, as you hold the hand which you would hold for ever, to find it cold as marble!—what would be *your* interpretation of the promise, that God will *wipe away all our*

^d Matt. xiii. 21.^e Gen. iii. 19.^f Psa. xxxii. 4.

tears? But we are told in so many words, (as the promise with some explanatory particulars is repeated in the twenty-first chapter,) that "God will wipe away all tears from our eyes," for that "there shall be *no more death.*"^g For till death shall have been disarmed of its *scythe*, as well as of its sting, will tears have ceased to flow? But they *shall* cease!—for "there shall be *no more death!*" *All* tears shall be wiped away;—*all*. Not a source of human sorrow is there which shall not be dried up! Not a trace of anxiety shall be to be seen on any brow! Not a scar will remain from all the wounds which had been inflicted in this vale of tears!

Ah! and ought it to be omitted—not, surely, if the prophecy be designed for the *present consolation*, while it describes the future blessedness of the church,—(for what such balm as that of *sympathy*, in sorrow, though it be no more than *human sympathy*?) let it not then pass without observation, that it is as performing the part of a *mother* to his church, God here presents himself, *wiping away her tears*. And let us then think what the mother, who has dried the eyes of her child, suffered *herself*, while the *child* suffered! And is He, who, as a "mother comforteth,"^h will comfort *his* children,—is He an indifferent spectator of the *trials* through which they pass?

I had almost said, need we proceed further? For, to bring back the state of *paradise*, what could we desire *more*? But no: it is not only what there will *not* be in the Heavenly state, but what *will* be in it, also, that is here presented to us; not only that "sorrow and sighing" will be excluded from it, but that "the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will feed" those who are admitted into it, "and lead them to living fountains of waters."

There is this distinction, however, between the former

^g Rev. xxi. 4.

^h Isa. lxvi. 13.

and the latter part of the vision ; that while there are *none* but can appreciate the blessing of deliverance from the evils with which we are afflicted,—*what* it will be, to be fed, as it is promised, and to drink of the living fountains to which the Lamb will conduct the blessed, those only can form any just conception, who have already some *experience* of what it is, who have *tasted* what eye hath not seen nor ear heard, who know *already* what to drink at those living fountains, is !

No—no others can have a conception (and themselves a very imperfect one, while they yet “see through a glass darkly,”) what it will be, when—in the sense in which it will be fulfilled in *Heaven*,—God will comfort those that mourn, will “give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness:”ⁱ—what it will be, to be “abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and made to drink of the river of his pleasures !”^j

And those only to whom Christ is *already* “precious” can conceive of it, as the central happiness of Heaven, to have himself “dwelling among them,” as the source,—like the sun to this lower world,—of all the light and glory of the Heavenly.

And we must have known something of the happiness which there is in the *service* of God,—that in the very act of “keeping his commandments, there is great reward,”^k—to understand, that to “*serve* him day and night in his temple,” will constitute so much of the happiness of Heaven. And yet can we doubt but that it will? What do we suppose to have become a principal part of the happiness of that son, of whom we read that “when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him?”^l Would

ⁱ Isa lxi. 3.^j Psa. xxxvi. 8.^k Psa. xix. 11.^l Luke xv. 20.

it not have been, from that hour, among his chiefest pleasures, to study the gratification, to meet the every wish, of such a father? And to those who have met with a reception, of which that in the parable is no more than a faint representation,—did he who said, “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips,”^m express *half* of what it will be to them to serve the God who so loved them, when it will be no longer “through a glass darkly” his love will shine upon them, and there will be no more any drag or clog upon the emancipated spirit, nor any striving of the flesh against it?—It will be the Heaven of Heaven to them, to “serve him day and night in his temple!” Was it not so to those whom John heard crying with a loud voice, “Salvation unto our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb?”

But neither is it to be passed over, in what *company* they will serve him. John saw “a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb.” The assembling of a scattered family upon *earth*, is an occasion of no little joy. What will it then be, when the scattered members of *Christ*, those of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,—when all the successive generations of the redeemed, from the first to the last partaker of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,—and some perhaps not unknown to ourselves, and whose memory is no less than sacred with us;—what will it be, when they shall all appear as one family, as one congregation of worshippers before the throne and before the Lamb, as “one body,” subject to the reproach, no longer, of division or disunion, and shall form one blessed society for ever and ever!

Upon such an occasion as that of the assembling of a

^m Psa. lxxiii. 5

dispersed family, does so much of the interest turn upon recollections of the past, upon the scenes and adventures of other days? With what thoughts and feelings will the assembled family of *Heaven*,—when they will no longer “know *in part*,”ⁿ when all the dispensations of which they had been the subjects, will have explained themselves,—with what admiration of those “ways which are not as our ways,” and of the adaptation of whatever happened to them to their exigencies,—with what thanksgivings to Him who made all things work together for such a consummation, will they retrace, one with another, “remember” (according to those words in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy) “all the way which the Lord their God had led them in the wilderness, when he humbled them, and suffered them to hunger!”^o For then surely will be the time, in the *full* sense of what is intended, for such a review of our past history, as that which was to occupy the Israelites in their earthly land of promise. He who once complained so mournfully that “few and evil had been the days of the years of his pilgrimage,”^p what thinks he *now* of all his trials, but as “light afflictions” truly, which endured “but for a moment?”^q The time was,—I hear from another,—the time was, when I took me a potsherd to scrape me withal, and sat down among the ashes, and thought the hand of my God too heavy upon me;—but the Lord has *indeed* “turned the captivity of Job.”^r Does he who “chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;” “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,”^s—does he *repent* of the choice he made? But in that song of “Salvation to the Lamb,” I seem to hear *one* voice above the rest, *one* harp as no other in the choir, struck by a hand

ⁿ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

^o Deut. viii. 2, 3.

^p Gen. xlvii. 9.

^q 2 Cor. iv. 17.

^r Job ii. 8, and xlii. 10.

^s Heb. xi. 25, 26.

once foul with crimes which made "the enemies of God to blaspheme,"^t but washed,—washed from the deep stains of murder and adultery, in the blood of the Lamb! But how many might we single out, vying with each other which shall sing loudest—shall sing longest, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," who has "redeemed us by his blood!"^u

I have been attempting, as I have glanced at the several parts of this vision of the blessedness which shall be hereafter, to lift up the veil a little, which hangs over eternal glory, honour, and immortality. And I trust, that through the power of the Holy Ghost accompanying his word, we may have been in some measure brought under the power of *the world to come*.

And yet it may be that we have been held back, some of us, by the chain of the world with which we are surrounded. For alas! as one who is earnestly intent upon anything, whose mind is occupied by some subject of absorbing interest or anxiety, may pass through the loveliest scene in nature, and take no notice of it; even so will all *Heaven's* scenery pass unheeded by those "whose heart goeth after its covetousness," whose Heaven is of *another kind*. But are you *content* that the god of this world should blind you to glory, honour, and immortality?

Or, it may be, that the mind has been charmed and enchanted by such a picture of the bliss and glory of Heaven. But who are they,—the great question then comes, who they are,—who shall be admitted to the enjoyment of it? They are those, says he of whom John enquired, who "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And who are *they*?

We read in the third chapter of the book of the prophet Zechariah, "Now Joshua stood before the angel, clothed with filthy garments;" and the angel said to those who stood

^t 2 Sam. xii. 14.

^u Rev. v. 12, 9.

by, "Take away the filthy garments from him, and to him he said, Behold! I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."^v To have washed our robes, is, in other words, to have received forgiveness of our sins: for—as it is added in the answer to John—(for God so loved the world as to have made an effectual and all-sufficient *provision* for the forgiveness of them) they are washed out *in the blood of the Lamb*: "for if the blood of bulls and of goats," (in the language of the Apostle to the Hebrews,) "if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the *flesh*; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge the *conscience*!"^w

But who are they whose consciences are thus purged, who are clothed with such change of raiment?—the question returns—who are they? how are they distinguished from others,—those who have thus washed their robes? *How* does it appear that any *other* robes or raiment have been washed? *This* is it—as it is in the twenty-fourth Psalm, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?—He that hath *clean hands and a pure heart*."^x John saw them "with palms in their hands," as *conquerors*,—as who had "*overcome* by the blood of the Lamb,"^y had gotten the *victory* over sin, as well as received forgiveness of it, by the blood of the Lamb. It is written, in letters which he who runs may read, over the gates of the new Jerusalem, as the inscription over them is presented to us in the twenty-first chapter of this book, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that *defileth*."^z

You would not admit into your *own* family, to be the

^v Zech. iii. 3—5.

^w Heb. ix. 13, 14.

^x Psa. xxiv. 3, 4.

^y Rev. xii. 11.

^z Rev. xxi. 27.

companions of your children, those who had contracted such habits as to render them ineligible companions for them. And is it to be supposed that God would admit into *his* family, among his holy angels and the saints made perfect, those whose tempers and dispositions would be in utter *contrariety* to theirs?

The angels, who had been always *in* Heaven, had no sooner sinned, than they were *cast out* of it. And can any hope to be *admitted*, with that about them, for which the angels were *expelled*? If one who had long enjoyed the favour of his Sovereign, and filled high situations under his government, were, for some glaring delinquency, banished from his court and kingdom, it would be in vain for any who were known to have been accomplices in his crime, to expect to succeed to the honours from which *he* had been *degraded*. If those, I say, who had been *always* inhabitants of Heaven, yet, when their robes became spotted, could be permitted to remain in it no longer, how vain for any to think to be allowed through its gates, who would bring sin with them into Heaven!

Ah! and if so much of the happiness of Heaven will consist in serving God and the Lamb, in what state are *they* for it, to whom his service, so far from being a source of happiness, would be a burden? In what state are *they* for the enjoyment of the *Heavenly* sabbath, to whom the sabbath upon *earth* brings no enjoyment?

Or, if you imagine, on the other hand,—for while it is suggested by the sensuality of our depraved nature, on the one hand, that the *happiness* of Heaven is attainable without its *holiness*, human pride and presumption will suggest, on the other,—that there is another way to Heaven, than by the *blood of Jesus*;—but how would one who thinks it, be prepared, I would only ask, for joining in that universal song of Heaven. “Worthy is the Lamb that was *slain*,”—

worthy of all the praise and adoration of Heaven? Has he a chord in unison with that rapturous acknowledgment of all *in* Heaven, "Thou hast redeemed us, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues;" thou hast redeemed us to God *by thy blood*? Would not such a one be, in Heaven, were he admitted there, like one, who, while in the presence of a beloved sovereign, the air was ringing with bursts of enthusiastic loyalty, was conscious of *treason*! or in the situation of a man, who, while a grateful and admiring people were expressing their sense of the services of a great and generous Deliverer who had devoted his life to the service of his country, would pluck the wreath from his brow, and disown all obligation to him! While it is for us to pray for those of the former class, that, instead of being satisfied with the *garb* of Christianity, or with an uninfluential creed, they may follow after that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,"^a let it be our prayer for any holding the sentiments of the other, that through a further acquaintance with the depravity of the heart, and the malignity of sin, and the holiness of God, they may yet be in a state to sing the song of the Lamb, to join in the acclamations with which Heaven rings.

But let me also have the privilege of addressing a few words to those upon whom the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has, in the riches of his grace, conferred at once, the title to Heaven and the moral qualification for it; whom, in the one respect, as in the other, "he has made *meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."^b And what, "though for a season, if need be, ye be in heaviness through manifold temptations?"^c Want, privation, be it of what it may, is but for a season. Consuming sickness, racking pain, are but for a season. The persecution of enemies, the unkindness of friends, are

^a Heb. xii. 14.^b Col. i. 12.^c 1 Pet. i. 6.

but for a season. The pang, the blank of bereavement, are but for a season. The cloud which hangs upon the church's prospects, will hang upon them but for a season, to be succeeded by a cloudless sky, and perpetual spring;—to be succeeded by “the fulness of joy” in the presence of our God, and “the pleasures for evermore, at his right hand!” The traveller finds little difficulty in reconciling himself to bad roads, and bad weather, and bad accommodation, while he reads upon each mile-stone that he passes, that he is nearer and nearer a beloved home. And has *he* less to smooth the roughness of the way, who, as he advances, sees more and more distinctly, the towers and battlements of the new Jerusalem? But have you not reason, mourners in Zion! have you not reason to “reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us?”^d

Nor does it less concern us, as we would grow in grace and not yield to temptation, than for support and consolation under trial,—that “the glory to be revealed” should be continually present to our minds. Could anything have tempted Peter, think you, to deny his Master, while he was in the bright cloud and glory in the mount with him? From those sapphires, and emeralds, and all manner of precious stones which garnish the city of the new Jerusalem,—from her gates of pearl, and streets of gold, and walls of jasper, a radiance is reflected upon the soul which is in the habitual contemplation of them, by which the whole life becomes illuminated! It is when the thoughts are habitually supplied and fed from “the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,”^e that we are as the trees planted by the water-side, the leaves of which are ever green, and which do not cease from yielding fruit; while

^d Rom. viii. 18.^e Rev. xxii. 1.

without such supplies from Heaven for the occupation of the mind, we become like the trees upon the road-side rather; and though we may not be upon the road itself, it will be too apparent that we are not unaffected by our *proximity* to it.

My younger brethren! if it be said to you, "Love not the world, nor the things of the world,"^f it is not that the sacrifice is demanded of you *without adequate compensation*. If you be called upon to renounce "the pleasures of sin for a season," it is that you may receive pleasures *for eternity*, in exchange for them. Let "the eyes of the understanding" of a young man be "enlightened," as it was the Apostle's prayer those of the Ephesians might be, "to know what is the hope of the Christian's calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the saints,"^g—it is no longer the glistening of gold, what is pleasant to the eye, what is pleasant to the flesh,—it is no longer the pomp, and show, and pride of life, that attract him.—The spell is broken! The chain by which the world held him is burst asunder! The spirit mounts, as on eagle's wings, and will not descend from its flight in the heavenly places, to catch at flies, and grub up worms! A light has broken in upon us, a light from where "there is no need of the sun," which has put out the glare which before dazzled and deluded us!

The only question by which we are now liable to be disturbed, is, whether blessedness, such as this, be really *attainable*—attainable by such a one as I am? And yet, have we not heard, what may well relieve us from any such doubt; yes, satisfy us, that while it is a blessedness which passeth all understanding, it is yet, what the vilest sinner may attain to, as it is enjoyed by the holiest angel? For that through the blood of the Lamb, he may become as that angel himself!

^f 1 John ii. 15.

^g Ephes. i. 18.

No! It was not cherubim armed with flaming swords^h that John saw before the gates of the new Jerusalem; nor the tree of life guarded as was mount Sinai:ⁱ but instead of terrors like those which accompanied the dispensation of Sinai, or flaming cherubim, he sees—the *Lamb* upon the throne of heaven,—“the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world,” “in the midst of the throne,”^j—the “blood which cleanseth from all sin,”^k sprinkling to the very centre of the throne of God! To whom then is it not accessible? “We have boldness to enter into the holiest,” let us have been never so *unholy*, by the “blood of Jesus.”^l

To look at that blessed company, it might have been thought, at first sight, that they were always, as they now are. But they not only “came out of great tribulation,”—they came all out of a state of *sin*, as well as of tribulation. Not one of those white robes, which had not need of washing. Had we stood by the side of John, when he saw them, or were a like view of those in Heaven presented *now* to any of us, to whom some of them had not been unknown upon earth, often and often, I doubt not, as the eye rested, now upon one, and now upon another, we should exclaim, in utter astonishment, What, *you* there! you, whom I remember all for the *world*!—and you, who seemed frivolity itself!—What! and you among the blessed, who were an *outcast* from the society of the *world*? “Yes”—I hear them answer—for we “have washed our robes,” foully stained as they were, and “made them white in the blood of the Lamb!”

What a cloud of witnesses would not that saved multitude supply—and *will* supply,—to the all-cleansing virtue of the ever-flowing blood of the Lamb! What the Apostle Paul said to the church of Corinth, after that his denuncia-

^h Gen. iii. 24. ⁱ Exod. xix. 12, 13, &c. ^j Rev. v. 6.

^k 1 John i. 7.

^l Heb. x. 19.

tion, "Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God;"—the words which he then added, "and such *were* some of *you*,"^m would not the Apostle John, after what he had seen and heard, have had reason to have addressed, in an infinitely-extended application, to the church of *Heaven*?—and such *were* not a few of *you*,—of you who are clothed in those unspotted robes!

What a verification he had before his eyes, of those his own words, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin!" With what an emphasis would not those his other words,—as he saw "out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," such monuments of grace,—with what an *emphasis* would it not have come back upon him, that "He is the propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*!"ⁿ

Yet, before we conclude, let us revert to the other branch of the Gospel salvation. Were we imagining the appearing of some, among the blessed, whom to see among them would create wonder? Ah! but what if the astonishment should be, not so much at those who are found, as at the absence of those who are *not* found among them! What, if the eye travel round, in vain, for one and for another, whom all had taken for real Christians; if some who had always professed to have fled for refuge to the *cross*, should not appear among the partakers of the *glory* of the Saviour!

Let us then,—while the echoes of the harps of Heaven are sounding in our ears, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"—while we behold him, as "the propitiation for our sins," let us also bear upon our hearts those *other* words of our Apostle, that "he that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."^o Think, how any of those

^m 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

ⁿ 1 John ii. 2.

^o 1 John iii. 3.

saints in light, were they sent down to live over again in this world, would keep themselves "unspotted" from it,—at what a distance they would keep themselves from whatever might soil their white robes,—how they would shudder at the thought of being seen in "a garment spotted with the flesh!"^p And never, never let us forget, that, if we would be their companions in *Heaven*, the same Heavenly mind must be formed in us, we must exhibit the same Heavenly tempers and dispositions, the same stamp and character of Heaven must be impressed upon us, while we are upon earth; or, (as it is in the third chapter of this book,) in the midst of a world lying in wickedness, and of professing Christians who have defiled their garments, we must "walk with him *in white*."^q

Now "unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all praise, and adoration, and honour, and glory, for ever and ever!

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have now heard with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that we may live as those who have washed their robes, and made them white, and as who would *overcome* by the blood of the Lamb, and that we may abound in the blessed hope of being admitted among those who stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

^p Jude 23.

^q Rev. iii. 4.



SERMON IX.

THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

ROMANS vi. 1—6.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”

“God forbid. How shall we, that are *dead* to sin, *live* any longer therein?”

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his *death*?”

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his *death*, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

WHILE the reconciliation and peace which there is for us with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,—the justification of the ungodly—where sin abounded, grace abounding beyond it—while the exceeding abounding Gospel grace and Gospel peace form the subject of the former part of the epistle, as what meet the first want of the awakened sinner, answer that his first waking question, “What shall I do to be saved?” the Apostle passes on in this chapter, in reply to another question which he seems to hear, as put by those who would turn the grace of God into licentiousness, or misrepresent it as *favouring* licentiousness, (as though because grace abounds, we might continue in *sin*,) he pro-

ceeds,—in vindication of the Gospel from any such misrepresentation or abuse,—to state in language the most emphatic, that it is a salvation from the *dominion*, as well as from the *condemnation* of sin, which it offers us; that it might as well be expected to see a dead man performing the functions of a living one, as to see one who was a partaker of the Gospel grace, living in sin.

“Know ye not,” says the Apostle, “that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his *death*?” that as many as, through faith in Christ, were admitted to the state of acceptance and justification before God of which he had been treating in the preceding chapters, and of which, in baptism, the believer was assured and certified, were “baptized into his death,” as a *model*, also, to which to conform themselves, and as supplying the *power* with which to do so. While we have “redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,”^a we are made conformable to his death, by dying to sin, ourselves. Or, as it is expressed in those other words, “We have been planted together with him, in the *likeness* of his death.”

Through the incorporation and conjunction with Christ which are wrought in us by faith, the virtue of his death is applied to us, not only as expiatory of sin, but as destructive to it. While we are “purged from our old *sins*,”^b our “old *man*,” also, is “crucified with him.” At the same time that we are accepted and justified by what he suffered *for* us, a moral *likeness* to his death is produced *within* us.

What makes real Christianity so unacceptable to corrupt human nature, is, that one of the first of its demands upon us, inseparable from our reconciliation with God, (though distinct altogether from the *ground* of it,) is to go *counter* to nature; nay, as far as it is corrupt, to *renounce* it. And

^a Col. i. 14.

^b 2 Pet. i. 9.

nature will no more give its consent to what thus declares war against it, than "Satan" could be expected to concur in the design to "cast out Satan."^c But so it is: as when, in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, Peter shrinks from the cross for his Divine Master, the Lord extends the *doctrine* of the cross to whosoever would belong to him; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross:"^d or, as when, in the twelfth chapter of St. John's gospel, our Lord compares himself to "a corn of wheat which falls into the ground and *dies*," he presently makes an application of the comparison to all that would be saved by him; "He that hateth his life, shall keep it unto life eternal."^e A conformity to his *own* sufferings is wrought, in as many as are saved by them, by their suffering in the flesh *themselves*. It is *therefore* baptism is called the circumcision of Christ; as in which there is "a putting off the body of the sins of the flesh."^f Or, to have the emphatic language of the text still before us, "Our old man is *crucified* with him."

It is out of this wreck of nature, upon these *ruins* of the old man, the *new* man rises, the new *nature*, the new *character*, is formed. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;" in newness of *life*, in a life *corresponding* to his resurrection, and of which the *power* of his resurrection is the efficient cause. "Instead of the thorn comes up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar comes up the myrtle-tree." As in that twelfth chapter of St. John's gospel, it is when the corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and *died*, (in the case of the *disciple*, as our Lord applies it, as well as in his own,) that it springs up and bears fruit. As in the second chapter of the epistle to

^c Matt. xii. 26.

^e John xii. 24, 25.

^d Matt. xvi. 22, 24.

^f Col. ii. 11.

the Galatians, the Apostle says of himself, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."^g

And if there be not greater progress made in such correspondence to the resurrection, in the conformity to the *life* of Christ, it is for want (is there not reason to fear?) of a more decided conformity to his *death*. "Always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus," says the Apostle, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."^h In the practical, consistent, advancing Christian, the *two-fold* process is in continual operation. In the exercise of prayer, for example—on the one hand, there is the struggle with the thoughts and suggestions of the *old* man, which would chain us to the earth; while, on the other, there is the elevation of the *new*, to where Christ is in the highest heavens. And so in *every* grace. On the one hand, there is the struggle with the out-breakings of natural impatience; while, on the other, we seek to form ourselves upon the model of Christ's patience. On the one hand, there is the struggle with the irritabilities and fretfulnesses of the natural temper; while, on the other, we are being re-cast in the mould of the meekness and suavity of Christ's temper. On the one hand, the self and contractedness of the old man are resisted; while, on the other, the heart expands with the love and generosity of the *new*. And so universally. On the one hand, our own will is denied and brought into subjection; while, on the other, the will of God acquires the ascendancy, and prevails.

And then—To what is such conformity conducting us? Of what is it the germ? What will be the full expansion and maturity of it? What the perfect likeness to the resurrection of Christ? Will it not be, not only that, to

^g Gal. ii. 20.

^h 2 Cor. iv. 10.

which, in the lineaments of the inner man, we shall attain, when, in another state of existence, "we shall see him as he is,"ⁱ—but will not our outward man, also, participate in the blessed conformity? Out of the graves in which are the bodies of those who fell asleep in Jesus, will not what was "sown in corruption" be "raised in incorruption?"^j What is now mouldering into dust, shall yet shine as the sun! what had become the prey of worms, will be associated with angels! "Our vile body will be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body!"^k—for "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you," if this, the seed and germ of the resurrection, be implanted in us, "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."^l

So much depends upon, and is involved in, the being "planted together in the likeness of his death;" the being "baptized into the *death* of Christ!" As—to refer once more to that twelfth chapter of St. John's gospel—first, the seed *dies*; then springs up the blade, out of which the ear is formed: in a more advanced stage succeeds the full corn in the ear. As in the epistle to the Philippians, it is the Apostle's prayer for himself, that he might "know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being made conformable to his death," "and the power of his resurrection," in a like conformity to his life: to which he adds, "if so be, he might attain to the resurrection from the *dead*."^m Such a superstructure as that which he contemplated, rising still higher and higher, was not to be erected, he well knew, but upon a foundation proportionably deep; upon no other than that of a conformity to his *death*, of such a participation in Christ's sufferings as involved the crucifying of the old man.

ⁱ 1 John iii. 2.^j 1 Cor. xv. 42.^k Phil. iii. 21.^l Rom. viii. 11.^m Phil. iii. 10, 11.

Not that it is to be supposed, strong as is the language that is employed, (for any such supposition would be attended with consequences the most disastrous,) it is not to be supposed that the corrupt nature becomes actually *extinct*. We hear, it is true, that “he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath *ceased* from sin:”ⁿ but the text supplies the explanation,—that he no “longer *serves* sin.” For that instead of being, as before, its servant, to obey its orders, he has become its master. But though “the servant abideth not in the house *for ever*,” he is not expelled from it *yet*. We hear, indeed, in yet more emphatic language, from another Apostle, that “he that is born of God *cannot* sin:”^o but what is in his mind is, plainly, the strong antipathy that exists—an irreconcilable enmity—between the Divine nature thus implanted in us, and everything of *sin*. But, that *another* nature *co-exists*, the most advanced Christian knows too well, from what passes within his own bosom. Nay, it is when the conflict commences, he begins to discover what that nature really is. As long as a man floats contentedly down the stream, he is little aware of the strength of the current. It is when he begins to stem it, and make head against it, he becomes sensible with what it is he has to contend. I was going to say, and, as it is not without consolation, as it may be applied, (*legitimate* consolation, for those who have an afflicting consciousness of the strength of in-dwelling corruption) I *will* say it, that when the wild beast has received its mortal wound, it will often make more desperate efforts than ever, and tear and plunge as it never did before. If the Apostle, in describing the transition from the state under the law, to that into which we pass under the Gospel, replies as he does to the question, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”—replies so exultingly, “I thank God through

ⁿ 1 Pet. iv. 1.

^o 1 John iii. 9.

Jesus Christ,"^p and adds, that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had set him free from the law of sin and death,"^q we presently hear him acknowledging, in another strain, "We ourselves, who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of the *body*"^r—of that body which is "dead because of sin,"^s which, while it is under sentence of death for *past* transgression, has in it those seeds and roots of sin and corruption which still tempt to *further* transgression. It is, as when the ivy has overgrown an old building, and struck its roots and fibres throughout it, it is not to be got out, till the building itself be pulled down. If the Apostle says to the Colossians, for instance, "Ye are dead:"—in the same breath he calls upon them to "*mortify* their members which are upon earth:"^t for that the pulse of the old man was still beating, that the life still lingered in their earthly members. If, in one place, he says to those to whom he writes, that they had "*put off* the old man with his deeds,"^u he urges them, in another, to a vigorous *prosecution of the work* of "putting off the old man."^v

In fact, baptism, as the Apostle presents it to us,—in the obligations which it involves, in the duties which it imposes, and in the exertions which it demands of us, as well as in the grace of which it is the seal and pledge—runs parallel with life itself. It is but the first point of a line which extends through the entire life. Accordingly, we hear from one who, if any, had advanced into the highest region of Christianity, from no other than the Apostle himself, "I keep *under* my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."^w

^p Rom. vii. 24, 25.^q Rom. viii. 2.^r Rom. viii. 23.^s Rom. viii. 10.^t Col. iii. 3, 5.^u Col. iii. 9.^v Eph. iv. 22.^w 1 Cor. ix. 27.

So that while, on the one hand, to admit the unholy suggestion that because grace abounds we might continue in sin, were an utter contradiction and subversion of the design of the whole Gospel; it would be attended with consequences scarce less fatal, on the other, so to interpret the crucifying and death of the corrupt nature, as if it became *extinct*, and that the necessity *ceased* of all further mortification and conflict. In such danger are we from this our inbred corruption, *to the last*: lest, when we least suspect it, it rally and return upon us, and break out in painful inconsistencies. The dog which has been bred in the house, though it may have been turned out of doors, and got many a good beating, and gone off yelping and howling under the lash, is still for returning to his old quarters.

And then,—seeing the *affinity* which there is between the flesh, and the external scene of temptation; between the body of sin, and the world of sin;—is there not reason to be tremblingly apprehensive of a *too free communication* between them?—Lest it should happen, as in the appalling case described in the Gospel, in which the evil spirit, after having been cast out of the man, returned to his house, from whence he went out, and finding it “empty, swept and garnished,”—prepared for his reception, as if he were *invited* to reoccupy it,—finding the man living at his ease, and hand in hand with the world, “went and took to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they entered in and dwelt there, and the last state of that man was worse than the first.”^x

Such the tenacity, alas! with which the corrupt nature clings to us, and such the dangers to which it exposes us, that it is to be dealt with, *to the last*, as if it were with a venomous serpent a man had to do, which, though it may have received its death blow, he still keeps under his feet,

^x Matt. xii. 45.

and stamps upon it, and crushes it, as long as there is any the least heaving of life in it.

But what, if instead of thus mortifying, *I* have been always *gratifying* my corrupt nature; if instead of crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, my object has been rather to “make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof!”^y The case is, indeed, most melancholy; as well for the amount of sin committed against God, as for the strength which, from habitual indulgence, the inbred corruption must have acquired. But, blessed be God! it is not irremediable. If we are baptized into the death of Christ, as a model to which to conform ourselves, are we not baptized into it, also, as “the propitiation for our sins?”^z We can be addressed, therefore, and *are* addressed, be our state what it may,—nay, in the prospect of such a propitiation, did they not hear, even under the *legal* dispensation,—“Return, thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord?”^a—Let the provocation have been what it may, and though the tide of indulged corruption should rush on, as it would seem, with uncontrollable impetuosity, there is forgiveness for the one, and grace sufficient to contend effectually against the other, *without any limit*. Through the “blood” which “cleanseth from all sin,”^b “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions as a cloud,” and, be the cloud never so thick, “thy sins.”^c Be the corruption never so strong, there is in the participation of Christ’s sufferings, and of the power of his resurrection, strength *for* us, greater than any that is *against* us!

The danger is, oh! is it not? lest there be limitation in *our* part,—lest, in professing to return, we do not return *wholly* to the Lord,—lest we keep back part—lest we attempt

^y Rom. xiii. 14.

^z 1 John ii. 2.

^a Jer. iii. 12.

^b 1 John i. 7.

^c Isa. xlv. 22.

to compromise between God and the world,—lest we “halt between two opinions,”—lest we do not go *the whole way*.

If, for want of the *entire* renunciation of what we are called upon to renounce—for want of carrying the self-denial to the extent demanded of us;—if, through the retention of any practice which ought to have been abandoned, of any habit which ought to have been subdued, of any instance of conformity to the world, in which we ought not to have conformed to it;—if, from the indulgence of any appetite, inclination, temper, which ought to have been mortified, a vent has been left for the body of corruption to breathe at, the old nature *dies* not, and, as we would not be the death of it, it becomes *our* death. As in the case of the fatal lenity shown by Ahab to the king of Syria,^d our own life will go for the life which we have spared. Was it not in the view of the fatal consequences of any such reservation our Lord uttered that thrilling admonition, and enforced it, as he did, in the ninth chapter of St. Mark’s gospel,—“If thy hand offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than, having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”^e What is there not expressed of what it *is* to retain any practice which ought to be renounced, to spare any corruption which ought to be mortified, nay, not to

^d 1 Kings xx. 34, 42.

^e Mark ix. 43—48.

relinquish what, though without sin in itself, might in us be the occasion of sin, by such solemn reiterated enforcement of the fatal consequences!

Let us then leave the church, with the solemn truth upon our minds,—howsoever in the review of the past it may humble us, yet with good hope and firm resolution for the future,—let us return to our homes, my brethren, under the full impression of the undeniable truth, and without any qualification of it, that in consequence of the deep corruption of our nature, of the enmity which the carnal mind breathes against God, the course upon which we enter at the very threshold of Christianity, and in which we must continue to the end, is a course of self-denial, of universal self-denial; of mortification of the carnal mind, of the corrupt nature;—that, in this sense also, the Saviour “came not to send *peace* upon earth”—not peace with *corrupt nature*, “but a *sword* ;”—that he puts a sword into the hands of his soldiers, to wage war with *his* and *their* great enemy, “the flesh with its affections and lusts,”—a war, in which there is to be no retreating;—that we must still fight the good fight, persevere in the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit;—that the sword must not be put back into the scabbard, till, in putting off the flesh itself, our warfare be accomplished;—till the cross be exchanged for the crown,—conflict for victory and triumph;—till, after having suffered with Christ, the time be come for our being glorified together!

And here I would conclude, but that I am not without apprehension that, while the conflict has been thus described to which we are called as Christians, there may have been a shrinking, on the part of the *young* especially, from what, as it may seem to *them*, would overcast the sun-shine of life; that Christianity, according to such a representation of it, may present a repulsive and forbidding aspect to them.

But is there real reason for any such impression? But is it not, as we resist and grapple with our corrupt nature, that what *indeed* overcasts the sunshine of life is *removed*? Is it not *then* we have the witness clear within ourselves that we are reconciled to God, that the reconciliation which there is in Christ for us, is not, in our case, misapplied? And is it in the indulgence, or in the subjugation of wild passions, and impetuous tempers, and importunate appetites, that the heart becomes light, and the brow serene, and the sky ever bright above us? It is that your sunshine, young friends, may be unclouded, that your bosom may be the region as of perpetual spring and summer, that the Gospel, still true to its one great design,—to make us happy,—calls upon you to “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.”^f What! is it the becoming like *Christ* that is to make us unhappy? In becoming holy as he is holy, can it be but that we shall become blessed as he is blessed!

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections, we may be buried with him; and that through the grave and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection, for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.^g

^f Gal. v. 24.

^g Collect for Easter Eve.

SERMON X.

CHRISTIAN VICTORY.

ROMANS xii. 21.

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

How different must Christians, then, be, from all around them! How different from those whom every temptation overcomes,—whom every opposition to their wishes overcomes,—whom every trial of their temper overcomes,—whom every contradiction of their opinion overcomes! How different must they be from those who are set on fire by an affront,—whose whole soul is up in arms, at the touch of injury, at the breath of insult! How different from those, must they be, who are the sport of their passions, and the slaves of their lusts! If “not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good,” be the character of Christians, how different must they be from that world which is in subjection to sin and Satan!

Yes—“Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory!” they can say,—the victory over their passions, their appetites, their tempers, the victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil!—“Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!”^a says the Apostle, in the name of all real Christians. As it is our prayer for those who are first admitted into Christ’s church,

^a 1 Cor. xv. 57.

“that they may have power and strength to have victory and to triumph against the Devil, the world, and the flesh.”^b

What, in truth, is our whole redemption—from the first conception of it in the mind of God, to its final consummation—but the overcoming of evil with good, the goodness of God overcoming the evil of man,—where sin abounded, grace abounding beyond it? What is it that is presented to us, through the whole life of our Redeemer, but this overcoming of evil? As he says to his church, from where he now is, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, *even as I also overcame*,”^c—which words, “*even as I overcame*,” (from the third chapter of the book of Revelation,) I would join with those which were given out, at the first, for our text, which will then run, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”—“*even as I overcame*.”

Let us first, then,—as it is to “follow the Lamb,” we are called “whithersoever he goeth,”^d—let us first observe the Saviour himself overcoming.

The Apostle’s exhortation follows (as we heard in the Epistle for the day^e) the prohibition to avenge ourselves: For “vengeance is *mine*; saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.”^f In what contrast, I need not say, with the sentiments and practice of man left to himself!

At this moment, could we see what He sees to whom all hearts be open,—what irritation, what bitterness, should we not see—hearts stung with injury, boiling with resentment, panting for revenge! But see Jesus injuriously treated!—When they came out, “as against a thief, with swords and with staves for to take him,”^g and Peter, in his zeal for his Master,

^b Baptismal Service.

^c Rev. iii. 21.

^d Rev. xiv. 4.

^e Third Sunday after Epiphany.

^f Rom. xii. 19, 20.

^g Matt. xxvi. 55.

drew his sword, and cut off the high-priest's servant's ear, "Put up thy sword into the sheath," he says to Peter,^h—and then touches the servant's ear and heals him. And when they had now loaded him with all manner of indignity, as well as offered him such savage violence; when they had bound him, and scourged him, and mocked him, and scoffed at him—Ah! and while he is writhing under the excruciating tortures of the cross to which they had nailed him, "Father, forgive them!" does He not say?ⁱ Well might he say it to those who are called to be like him, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."^j

Nay—does a man think others wanting in attention to him, that he is slighted, made little of, that he is treated with disrespect, that he is not given the precedence, or shown the preference to which he conceives himself to be entitled? Perhaps he becomes like Haman, when Mordecai would not bow to him.^k See the Lord of glory treated with disrespect!—The Pharisee who invited him to his table, had been wanting in all the courtesies, in all the common offices of Eastern hospitality. He had not given him the usual welcome of a kiss, nor the refreshment of oil for his head, nor of water for his feet. It is true, Jesus remarked upon the absence of such attentions, in contrast with those which he was receiving from the woman who was present; but it was with a sweetness—and while Simon was thinking with such disparagement of him, as though he had not been even "a prophet,"^l—with a sweetness it was, to touch the heart of Simon—unlike the sensitiveness or sullenness of *our* wounded pride!

Let any of us observe the motions within them, and say,

^h John xviii. 10, 11. ⁱ Luke xxiii. 34. ^j Matt. v. 44.

^k Esther v. 9, &c. ^l Luke vii. 36—46.

if another be unkind, or disobliging to them, whether they be not tempted to be disobliging and unkind in return;—if another be cold and distant in his manner to them, whether they be not tempted to draw up, themselves, and to be cold and distant, also? See Jesus meeting with coldness and unkindness!—He is passing through Samaria, and being wearied with his journey, sits down by a well, and asks a woman who comes to draw water at it, to give him to drink: She refuses. But he, so far from expressing or feeling anything of unkindness to her, and notwithstanding the state of exhaustion in which he then was, will not let her part from him, till he has given her refreshment which she *denied him*; no less refreshment, than to drink of that water, of which whosoever drinketh “shall never thirst!”^m And she was a woman whose character had still less to recommend her, than her behaviour to him.

Let a person be interrupted when he is particularly engaged; or broken in upon, when he is with those with whom he would desire to be alone; or called away from the bosom of his family, suppose, when, after the engagements of the day, he is promising himself the enjoyment of having them about him;—is nothing of *impatience* expressed at such interruptions? But see Jesus thus interrupted!—He had just said to his disciples, when they had returned, wearied with the labours in which he had employed them, (as we have the account in the sixth chapter of St. Mark’s Gospel,) “Come apart into a desert place, and rest awhile;” for they had not leisure so much as to eat. Yet, when the multitude followed them to their retreat, Jesus, so far from expressing anything of displeasure at the intrusion, meets them with a countenance beaming with the same benignity as ever. — “He was moved with compassion for them, because they were as sheep having no shepherd; and he

^m John iv. 5, &c.

began to teach them many things."n Nor did he let them go, without working a miracle for their *bodily* refreshment also.

We know how men feel, when they are calumniated—when their character is injured—when they are belied—when things are laid to their charge, for which there is no foundation—or, if their words be misrepresented. Jesus was not spared *these* trials, no more than any others. But see him under them!—When he is put to his trial before Caiaphas, (as we have the account in the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew,) “At the last, came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it, which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace.”o We see no impatience to vindicate himself, nor hear any exclamations against his infamous accusers. And when he was afterwards brought before Pilate, and “was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? and he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.”p

But perhaps the trial is yet more keenly felt, when it comes from friends—when we are disappointed in friends—when the alleviations of friendship, and if it be at the time when we most want them, are denied us. Yet—“Could ye not watch with me one hour?” was the severest reproof which they received, who had failed him in that his hour of extremity, and then forsook him altogether.—Nay, and did he not add, to make what excuse for them he could, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak?”q

n Mark vi. 31—34.

o Matt. xxvi 60—63.

p Matt. xxvii. 12—14.

q Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.

But how sore the trial, when those in whom we placed confidence, abuse our confidence—when those, whom we thought bound to us by the strongest ties, turn against us ! And yet—“ Friend, wherefore art thou come ?”^r was the worst which even Judas heard from his injured Master !

It would be truly edifying, did the time permit—but I would leave the rest to your own comparison, my brethren, of the life and character of the blessed Jesus with the lives of others ; or rather, with the tendencies of which you are conscious in yourselves—or it would have been not a little edifying, had the time permitted, to have followed our Divine Master, while we are upon this subject, in all the variety of trials in which he was “ tempted like as we are,” and to have seen him *overcoming* in them all.

For the present, however, I would only glance at one instance more, of the superiority which he displayed to the nature which he took upon him. If we be in suffering, ourselves, if the spirits be depressed by sickness, if some calamity be hanging over us, if anything relating to our own interests be a source of anxiety to us, we know how apt what we feel for ourselves is to shut out, for the time, however, every thing of sympathy and consideration for others. But was it so with Jesus ? I see him now approaching the last scene of his sufferings, and with those his impending sufferings, in all their intensity, present to his mind.—It is for Jerusalem he weeps,—not for himself:^s yes, for that Jerusalem which had rejected him, and was about to fill up the measure of her iniquity, by putting him to an ignominious death ! Are they at hand, who were sent to apprehend him ?—“ If ye seek me, let these go their way,”^t does he not say ?—He would provide for the safety of his *disciples*, come what might upon *himself*. Does he see the women following him with lamentations to the place of execution ?

^r Matt. xxvi. 50.

^s Luke xix. 41.

^t John xviii. 8.

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me,” he says to them, “but for yourselves and for your children.”^u All the agonies of the Cross could not make him inattentive to what was due to the *mother* who stood by it:^v and there,—while his body is in torture, and his soul in anguish; while those who pass by, instead of expressing anything of sympathy for him, are taunting and deriding him; while one of the thieves, crucified with him, is joining in the revilings,—see him bending his ear to the prayer of the other thief, as though he had nothing of his own to attend to, as if he had nothing then to occupy him, but to snatch the expiring penitent with him into Paradise!^w

But let us now turn our eyes from our Divine Master, upon *ourselves*, my brethren. For “to him that *overcometh*,” it is—“to him that *overcometh, even as I overcame*, I will grant him to sit with me in my throne.”

Are *we* then, when we are tempted like as he was, overcoming, or striving to overcome, as he did? If injured, slighted, undervalued, insulted,—if treated with unkindness, with disrespect,—if falsely accused,—if disappointed in friends,—if we meet with ingratitude from those who were under obligations to us,—or, in any other such trial—do we overcome, or are we overcome, ourselves? Are we impatient of opposition, contradiction, reproof;—are we “easily provoked;” is the brow soon clouded, the temper soon ruffled?—Oh! is it with any of us, as it was with Nebuchadnezzar, when, upon his will being opposed, “he was full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed?”^x

Parents, are you overcome by the evil which you see breaking out in your children? Does your expression of countenance, your tone of voice, say, you are?

Masters, mistresses, if your orders be neglected, or for-

^u Luke xxiii. 28.

^v John xix. 26, 27.

^w Luke xxiii. 35—43.

^x Dan. iii. 19.

gotten, or mistaken, if you be kept waiting, if things be not done in a manner to please you, do you give way to anger, and do *not* “forbear threatening?”^y

If those who are in circumstances to be applied to by others for relief, meet with unreasonableness, or ingratitude, or imposition, from any who apply to them, *in what spirit* do they meet with it?—And the others,—if disappointed, if refused what they apply for, or if not relieved to the extent of their expectations?

If one, engaged in teaching, find all his efforts with a child unavailing, and that no progress is made, does he give up the child as hopeless, or learn, himself, a lesson from One, who, when his scholar seemed incapable of an idea beyond the well that was before her eyes, and the water-pot which she came to fill at it, persevered with her, till she became one of those who understand all things?^z

In money transactions, are we overcome by self-interest, and the desire of gain? Is the standard of those adopted, who make no conscience of depreciating the property of others, and of setting an undue value upon their own? Do you form resolutions, and when the time comes for keeping them, and the temptation is presented to break them, are you overcome by the temptation? Or, having escaped from the pollutions that are in the world, are you again entangled therein, and overcome? Is the sabbath again mis-spent? Is the Bible left unread? Is prayer neglected? Has the world recovered its hold upon you? Are the lusts of the flesh again indulged?—Does the flesh succeed in keeping a man ignorant, worldly, sensual, while Christ is calling him to be enlightened, heavenly, spiritual?

Ah! my brethren, the reason why so many will “*seek* to enter in, who shall not be able,” is because so few “*strive* to enter in,”^a—strive to overcome the enemies which oppose

^y Ephes. vi. 9.

^z John iv. 7, &c.

^a Luke xiii. 24.

their entering in. It is because "the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," and so few will *do this violence* to their own natural inclinations.

Nor is it *any* overcoming that is to satisfy those who are to overcome as Christ did—No, not unless we "overcome evil with *good*,"—according to what precedes the text, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." Anger, vindictiveness, may not break out, and yet may be indulged: and though it be not—unless benefits be returned for injuries, the victory is incomplete. As when Joseph fell and wept upon the necks of those brothers who had sold him for a slave.^b As when David's conduct forced Saul to confess, "Thou art more righteous than I; for whereas I have rewarded thee evil, thou hast rewarded me good."^c Or, as when Paul said to the Corinthians, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."^d

Unless violence be opposed by gentleness, the victory is incomplete—unless provoking language receive a soft answer, such as was that of Gideon to the sharp chiding of the men of Ephraim.^e—Or as when upon the return of the prodigal son, the elder brother was angry, and would not go in; the father—no, he did not say, Then let him stay *without*; or, speak to him as he deserved to be spoken to,—but he "went out and *entreated* him."^f

Unless an unkind look be met by looks of *kindness*, it is not overcoming, as Christ overcame. For what must not His countenance have expressed, who was "stretching out his hands, all the day long, to a disobedient and gainsaying people!"^g

It is happy to see our dear children kind and gentle to one another. But to be a *Christian* boy, it is not enough

^b Gen. xlv. 15.

^c 1 Sam. xxiv. 17.

^d 2 Cor. xii. 15.

^e Judges viii. 1—3.

^f Luke xv. 28.

^g Rom. x. 21.

to love those who love *you*, and to be kind to those who are kind to *you*; but if another be *unkind* to you, if another speak harshly, or behave roughly to you, there is not only to be no “rendering of evil for evil, or railing for railing,” or blow for blow, “but contrariwise, blessing,”^h says the Apostle. Oh! to see our youth, our dear children, thus overcoming nature,—to see this reducing of the Gospel to practice, commencing in our schools, and very nurseries!—This is the passing the boundary line from morality into Christianity.

And as we here learn what Christianity really is, my brethren, and are presented with the beautiful model of it in our Divine Master, we learn at the same time from those words, “*As I overcame,*” by what *means* we may overcome, as he did.

“*Then* was Jesus led up of the Spirit,” we read, “into the wilderness, *to be tempted of the devil.*”ⁱ *When?* Was it not while the voice from Heaven was sounding in his ears, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?”^j It is in like manner *we* engage in the conflict,—as “sons of God,” as “accepted in the beloved;” as those who, through faith in him, stand before God, *in* him; as whom God regards, no longer as we are in ourselves, but in his beloved Son; and *as* his beloved Son—with the favour with which He regards his blessed Son himself.—We advance to fight the good fight, as those who in their reconciliation and adoption, have the pledge and earnest of *victory*; as who shall overcome, even as the Son of God himself overcame.

Then see him in the actual conflict!—In that most arduous crisis of it, when “his sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground;”^k and it was wrung from

^h 1 Pet. iii. 9.

^j Matt. iii. 17.

ⁱ Matt. iv. 1.

^k Luke xxii. 44.

sinking nature, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," it was upon his *knees* he got the power to add,—“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as *thou* wilt!”—It was in answer to “the supplications and prayers, with strong crying and tears,” of which we read in the fifth chapter to the Hebrews,^m that the angel was sent from Heaven, to strengthen him.ⁿ It is upon our knees *we* shall get the power to overcome as he did.

And it was in the *prospect* of the approaching storm,—it was to prepare himself for what he saw coming upon him, *before* it had come upon him,—Jesus thus gave himself to prayer. And it is for *us* to be fetching in such supplies beforehand,—each morning, for instance,—for any peculiar trials which we may have reason to expect, and for the unknown exigencies for which we should be prepared, during the day.

Again—“Could ye not *watch* with me one hour?” says our Lord to his disciples; “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” When we thus watch, we know for what it is we *want* to pray. It is the discovery of our wants, and of our dangers, that puts an *edge* upon our prayers. Oh! and when we recollect that *we* have not only enemies from *without*, assaulting and besieging us, but lurking traitors *within* also, ever ready to open the gates of the soul to those enemies, and admit them, is it for us to be for one moment without our sentinels on guard, if we would not fall into their hands?

And while we consider *by what means* our Divine Master overcame, we are not to forget with what *sword* he was armed—with what sword it was he was armed, when he repelled the tempter in the wilderness; that to each temptation, as it arose, he replied, “It is *written* ;”^o—that

^l Matt. xxvi. 39.

^m Heb. v. 7.

ⁿ Luke xxii. 43.

^o Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10.

it was from his remembrance of the *Scriptures*, and his solicitude to *fulfil* the *Scriptures*, he would not “pray to his Father” for “legions of angels”^p to cut the conflict short.—And if *we* would overcome, it must be with the same weapon in our hands, with the same “sword of the Spirit.” To what is it we are tempted? The Spirit makes such a *use* of this his sword, for the soldiers of Christ who are armed with it, the Spirit, who brings to our remembrance whatsoever Christ has spoken to us, (if so be what he has spoken to us be laid up in the heart,) will still suggest such passages as shall meet our peculiar case and exigency, will bring the word so to bear upon the temptation, as to snatch us out of the very jaws of sin!

And while we are considering by what means our Divine Lord overcame, neither are we to forget that it was “for the *joy* that was set before him, he endured the cross.”^q And that *we* may endure it, He would have “the fulness of joy in his presence, the pleasures for evermore at his right hand,”^r “the crown” which he promises to him that overcometh,^s to be ever before us.—As they were those of his disciples who had seen his glory in the mount,^t whom he chose to be the witnesses of his agony in the garden,^u as who had seen what would *sustain* them in the sight of his agony. Little did Stephen think of their “gnashing upon him with their teeth,” and all their savage rancour; he little felt the stones with which they were assailing him,—while with *other* eyes, than those which they could put out, he “looked up stedfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God.”^v He “reckoned the sufferings of the present moment, not worthy to be compared with the glory” which was breaking in upon him, through them. As in the addresses to the churches, in the second and third

^p Matt. xxvi. 53. ^q Heb. xii. 2. ^r Psal. xvi. 11. ^s Rev. ii. 10.

^t Mark ix. 2, &c.

^u Mark xiv. 33, &c.

^v Acts vii. 55.

chapters of the book of Revelation, our Lord holds up before each, what would *follow* their fighting the good fight. As to the church of Ephesus, he says, "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God;" and to the church of Smyrna, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death;" and so to every one of them—as to that of Laodicea, at the close,—“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”^w Would we *overcome*—such a contest it is we are called to—it must be with Paradise *as in sight*; with our hand, as it were, upon the fruit of the tree of life.

Nay—and from those words, “*As I overcame,*” are we not taught also to expect *the very power* to be given us, through which he overcame? As we hear the Apostle speaking of himself, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Colossians, as “striving according to his working, who was working in him mightily,”^x—and in the first to the Ephesians, praying that they might know what was “the exceeding greatness of the power”^y there was for them,—no less than what obtained for Christ the victory over death itself,—he says. So that we are not to shrink from the contest, or excuse ourselves under defeat, as though the case were altogether different, between Christ and ourselves,—as though, in the weakness of our nature, we could not expect to gain the victories which Christ gained. For will He not give us of *his own strength*? Nay—Is not Christ the man of war, rather than *we*? “Not *I,*” says the apostle, “but Christ” who is “in me.”^z Yes—We can do all things through Christ strengthening us^a—can come off “more than conquerors, through him that loved us!”^b

^w Rev. ii. 7, 11; iii. 21.

^x Col. i. 29.

^y Eph. i. 19, 20.

^a Gal. ii. 20.

^z Phil. iv. 13.

^b Rom. viii. 37.

And I trust I am addressing not a few, who know from their own experience, that such victories are to be achieved; who know from their own experience, that the things which are impossible with *men*, are possible with *Christians*.

I seem to see one, whom another has spoken of as he ought not, or harassed, suppose, with vexatious proceedings in a court of law: he is tempted to feel such treatment keenly, and to resent it, and to desire to be no more on any terms, nor to hold any further communication, with one who has acted such a part towards him—till, as the Spirit brings to his remembrance, “I say not unto thee, Till seven times, but, Until seventy times seven,”^c—till, as he hears a voice behind him, “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,”^d I see him struggling with nature, and in prayer to overcome it; and he *does* overcome it, and every spark of vindictiveness is extinguished within him, and he can forgive from the heart, and give the right hand of fellowship to the man who had despitely used him. This is to be a Christian!

I picture to myself, in a district upon the sea-coast, of which I have the charge, one of our poor fishermen, whose family is in distress, and who has had no earning of late, and has run deeply into debt, seeing others take large quantities of fish newly come into the bay, *upon the Lord's-day*; and his own boat is on the beach, and his nets are in readiness, and the rest of his crew would not lose such an opportunity.—But,—“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, *not doing thy own ways*,”^e—the words start up in his memory, and stand, as an angel with a drawn sword, in his way; and like the fishermen of old, he leaves boat, and nets, and crew, to follow Jesus—assured,

^c Matt. xviii. 22.

^d Matt. v. 44.

^e Isa. lviii. 13.

that, let things appear as they may, "If the Lord be his shepherd, he shall not want."^f

Another is solicited by the rest of his family to accompany them upon a party of pleasure, or to a place of amusement, in which he apprehends danger, or, perhaps, sees direct opposition to the will of God. No persuasions are left untried to shake his resolution, and overcome his scruples: at one time he is upbraided with his unkindness, at another laughed at for his particularity: but—"He that loveth father or mother more than me,"^g he that loveth brother, sister, wife, more than me, is not worthy of me!—he seems to hear it with an application to himself, which renders all their solicitations like the waves assailing a rock!

Not that I mean to say that the Christian is *always* thus victorious—that he has his foot thus upon the necks of his enemies, always. Little should we know of ourselves, could we say so. Were it so, so many couches would not have been watered with tears. We should not then have heard the complaint, "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer."^h It is a provision for *Christians*, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins."ⁱ It is a provision for *Christians*, "If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."^j It is a provision for *Christians*, (blessed be God for it!) "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."^k Yet the Christian's *motto* is, "Conquering and to conquer."^l The Christian's *object* is, "herein to exercise himself, to have a conscience void of offence towards God

^f Psa. xxiii. 1. ^g Matt. x. 37. ^h Psa. xxxii. 4. ⁱ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

^j 1 John i. 7.

^k Gal. vi. 1.

^l Rev. vi. 2.

and towards men.”^m The Christian’s constant *resolution* is, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those that are before, to press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”ⁿ And if he *fall*, it costs him, what it cost Peter,—and like Peter he throws himself at the feet, or rather runs into the open arms, of his Saviour, and renews his strength, and renews the conflict, and is again “more than conqueror through him that loved him!”

Or am I addressing any, (it is not improbable I may be,) who, while they are not the willing slaves of sin,—far from it,—yet, in their conflict with it, durst not think of themselves, as possessed of the exalted *privileges* which there are for us in Christ; durst not think of themselves, as though they could engage in the conflict, in the character of “children of God;” cannot regard themselves, as it is for such to do, as being in the same position, as standing in the same relation to God, as that in which Christ stood when he overcame the evil one. What is it, then, for them to do? What, but what the Baptist directed those to do whom he was preparing for Him who should come after him,—to guard against the temptations to which they are most exposed; to struggle with the corruptions of which they are most conscious, the sins which most easily beset them; to be still asking, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” as those who would, indeed, do his will, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in the heart. For you may depend upon it, to him who thus hath, more shall be given; light will break in upon you, grace will descend upon you, the Gospel in all its fulness will open to you, till *you*, also, be “more than conquerors through him that loved you!”

Or am I addressing any,—we often, however, alas! do,—

^m Acts xxiv. 16.

ⁿ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

seldom, it is to be feared, do *not*,—who, so far from knowing what it is to *overcome*, know not what it is to *struggle* with their own evil inclinations—who are “led captive by Satan at his will,” without any resistance of their *own* will—to whom sin, so far from being a burden too heavy to bear, is,—is no burden whatsoever! Are there any such present? But though there were, I would address them with the hope that He, whose it is, to overcome our evil with his goodness, would yet thus triumph over theirs. For what is the “hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces,” but the love which overcomes evil with *good*? It is the rod with which *Christ* strikes the rock, and the waters gush out. And he, who but now was insensible to sin, is tempted to regard his sin as too great for mercy. But no—Neither are we to be *in this manner* “overcome of evil.” We are not to be discouraged by any sense of it, that is, from looking for the pardon of it. Be the evil what it may, and let it be accumulated as it may, the grace of the Saviour is beyond it. Be your sin what it may, there is no reason but that you should yet be among those who “overcame, by the blood of the Lamb.” No reason but that you should yet join in the triumphal song, “Thanks be to God who giveth us *the victory*, through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that we may be resolved and determined to fight the good fight; and give us, we beseech thee, the power and strength to have victory and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh, to the honour and praise of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



SERMON XI.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

1 JOHN i. 1—7.

“ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life ;

“ (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us ;)

“ That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

“ And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

“ This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

“ If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth :

“ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

VARIOUS the inventions and traditions of men, which pass in the world under the name of religion. For some kind of religion or other, sooner or later, a man *must* have—unless he can persuade himself that all beyond the grave is a blank, that the Bible is a fiction, and eternal judgment a dream. Or something he must have, in the shape of religion, by which, in the prospect of eternity, to speak

peace to himself. But this something,—even where the word of God reveals the one and only true religion,—through the blindness which there is to truth, and the desire to reconcile future happiness with present gratification, assumes an infinite variety. Some make it to consist in a round of outward observances, and freedom from outward excesses. Others take up with what they think to be clear apprehensions of scriptural doctrine, an intellectual reception of the truth; while others satisfy themselves without even this much of knowledge, or this much of practice; but—they have done no great harm, they think, and God is merciful—and this is the sum of their religion! Some depend upon their present sufferings, as sufficiently answering for all their sins—as though what they suffer here, were a substitute for the sinner's doom hereafter; while others rest their hopes in their good deeds, which, they trust, will be favourably considered—will be a set-off, in the day of account, against their sins!

With these, and other such delusions, men continually lull their consciences:—wretched counterfeits of religion, coined in the darkness of the unrenewed heart, and given currency by the love of darkness rather than light!

In contrast with such miserable cheats upon the soul, with such perversions and distortions of the truth, we are here presented with the truth, as it is in Jesus. “That which we have seen and heard,” says the Apostle, “declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship”—our *fellowship*—“is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

For in what does our ruin consist, but in the *separation* which has taken place, in our alienation from God? “They are alienated from the life of God:”^a—as our first parents, immediately upon their fall, hid themselves from

^a Eph. iv. 18.

the presence of the Lord:—as it is represented in the parable in which the son forsook his father, and took his journey into a far country:—as Job speaks, “they say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”^b Religion is the reuniting the tie, the closing the breach, the throwing down the partition, the bringing those nigh who were far off; it is a reconciliation and reunion between God and man; or rather,—or we are still below the account which the Apostle gives of it,—it is the restoration of *communion* with God. “And truly our *fellowship* is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

For was it anything less than this, that was contemplated for us by the Saviour, when he promised, “If a man love me, and keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our *abode* with him?”^c or when he promised from Heaven, afterwards, “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me?”^d

It is in such communion eternal life is restored to us. We then feed upon “the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”^e We hear, accordingly, in the same connexion, from the Apostle, “We show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”^f For, “if a man abide not in *me*,” (as we hear,)—as a branch severed from the stem, he withers.^g It is when “we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us,” when, according to this his own similitude, we are in him, as the branches are in the stem, that we have eternal life abiding in us. We then receive out of his fulness—our spiritual decays are repaired—our spiritual strength is renewed—“we are planted together with him in the likeness

^b Job xxi. 14.

^c John xiv. 23.

^d Rev. iii. 20.

^e Rev. ii. 7.

^f 1 John i. 2.

^g John xv. 6.

of his death," in dying unto sin; and "in the likeness of his resurrection,"^h in living to God—we drink of that "living water" which "springs up in us into everlasting life!"ⁱ

And in what, then, does such communion consist? What does the ear hear, when we are in fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and what does the heart answer? What think we they hear in Heaven? What is it that awakens those raptures of praise, that calls forth those bursts of hallelujahs?—What—but their vivid apprehension of that loving-kindness which is better than life—such a beaming of the light of God's countenance upon them, that there is no need of the sun—the flowing out upon them of the refreshings from the Divine presence! And when we *now* draw near to God, and He to us,—when Christ comes to us, and manifests himself to us, and makes his abode with us, *we* hear, only less distinctly, what they hear *above*; we see, though dimly it may be, what they see, "face to face;"—of what makes Heaven Heaven, we have, in our measure, the enjoyment upon earth! When the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity comes to dwell, also, with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit, he gives him to drink of the same river which "makes glad the city of God," of "the pure river of the water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."^j—What does the ear then hear,—did I say? It hears—for with *whom* is the fellowship?—It hears, "As the Father loveth *me*, even so have I loved *you*."^k And what does the heart answer, do we ask?—"Whom have I in Heaven but *thee*?"—what other answer *can* it make?—"and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee!"^l

Is the day, without, dark? Do clouds gather? We hear, from where no clouds approach, "Fear not, little

^h Rom. vi. 5.

ⁱ John iv. 10, 14.

^j Rev. xxii. 1.

^k John xv. 9.

^l Psa. lxxiii. 24.

flock! it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."^m Meanwhile, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered."ⁿ No less really than to Abraham, (or under the more advanced dispensation of grace we should have receded, instead of advancing,) no less really does God *now*, invisibly, manifest himself to those, with whom the secret of the Lord is,—saying, "Fear not, I am thy shield."^o His "angels ascending and descending" are such messengers to them, as they were to outcast Jacob.^p Their Lord now takes them up with him into the mount, and they see what Peter, and James, and John saw.^q Now Heaven opens to them, as to Stephen, and they see Him whom Stephen saw. "standing on the right hand of God"^r for them!

And yet, it is rather to their ordinary state, than to when they are in peculiar exigencies, our thoughts are directed by the words of the Apostle. When he says that "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," it would seem to be the state of mind which is *habitual* to them, rather than any, to which upon especial occasions, and in extraordinary emergencies, they are elevated, he is describing. And what, then, *is* the ordinary state,—what the walk through the day, of one who walks with God? "Have I not thought upon thee, when I was waking"^s—cannot we hear him? "It is a good thing to tell of thy loving-kindness early in the morning!"^t—for by whom is it felt to be good to do it, if not by him, to whose thought that loving-kindness is continually present?—Is he called to take part in the active engagements and busy scenes of life? In the midst of what impels others, as with eyes that see not, and ears that hear not, *he* "sees him that is invisible;" he hears "a word behind him, saying, This is

^m Luke xii. 32.

ⁿ Luke xii. 7.

^o Gen. xv. 1.

^p Gen. xxviii. 12.

^q Matt. xvii. 1, &c.

^r Acts vii. 55.

^s Psal. lxxiii. 7.

^t Psal. xcii. 1, 2.

the way, walk ye in it." Do difficulties beset his path? In casting all his care upon Him who careth for him, he is satisfied that either he shall be extricated from them, or sustained under them: be the waters never so troubled, in communion with Him who sitteth above the waterflood, he is, as in smooth water; he has "an anchor for the soul, sure and stedfast, within the veil!" Or is he where the eye of man is upon him no longer? And how then does He who "seeth in secret," see him in secret engaged? Is it not,—not unfrequently, however—as when Nathanael was seen under the fig-tree, or as Isaac, when "he went out at eventide to meditate?" Nay, and in his hours of recreation, though he unbend, he would not descend. He joins, or *would*, in the cheerfulness of the domestic circle, or in any other social intercourse in which he may engage, as one who is *also* in "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

While, however, it is the ordinary and habitual state of one who walks with God, we are presenting to ourselves, we are not to exclude from what belongs to it, those times and seasons which are still recurring, of more than ordinary refreshment from the presence of the Lord, and which give so much of its tone and elevation to the state of mind which is habitual. Is it so "good to tell of the loving-kindness" of which he is the object, as it is "new every morning?" It is as if the sun rose yet brighter, as the *Sabbath* memorial of it comes round! Is there the promise, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord"^u—and is it not for one who does so honour the sabbath of the

^u Isa. lviii. 13, 14.

Lord, to expect it to be no common day to him? Is it promised, "I will make my people joyful in my house of prayer,"^v—and shall they not then go up to it, as *hoping* to be made joyful in it? But are they not authorised to hope it will be, as "the house of God, and the gate of Heaven," to them? Has the Saviour said, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him?"^w While to whosoever feeds upon Christ by *faith*, the promise is in a course of *continual* fulfilment,—is it not, however, for such a one, in the ordinance in which he hears, "This is my body! this is my blood!" to expect *especial* enjoyment of Christ's presence with him? While it is the ordinary and habitual walk with God we have been tracing, those especial seasons and opportunities of grace are to be taken into account, as which exercise so much influence upon it. The springs are then open, as not at other times, and swell the current of the living water which flows in the channels of the ordinary life.

And neither are we to pass over what the Apostle, in this his account of what true religion *is*, presents to us as involved in, and inseparable from, such fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. "If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship also *one with another*," says the Apostle. As many as are brought into such a relation to Christ, stand in a like relation to all who are Christ's. If we be in fellowship with the head, we have fellowship with the members also. When the Apostle wrote, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full," he had the joy present to his mind of the love of brethren, of the communion of saints, as well as that of communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. No—nor is it with the brotherhood upon *earth* only, we are brought into such a relation. A bond is then formed with

^v Isa. lvi. 7.

^w John vi. 56.

the whole family named of Christ, whether in Heaven or upon earth: "Ye are come to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."^x We shall know, one day, what we owed to the unseen ministry of those celestial beings who are sent forth to minister upon earth for the heirs of salvation.^y And one day, however, we shall know what it is to be "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God"^z—when the time shall have come for our sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—when we shall be admitted into the society of "the glorious company of the Apostles," and "the goodly fellowship of the Prophets," and "the noble army of Martyrs,"—when those who were separated, for a season, shall be reunited, for eternity,—when "with Angels and Archangels and all the company of Heaven," present *visibly*, we shall, as with the voice of many waters and of mighty thunderings, "laud and magnify thy glorious Name, evermore praising thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory: Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High!"^a

Or do we seem to have spoken other than the words of truth and soberness—as though what has been said of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the body of which Christ is head, were visionary and unreal? But lest it should be so regarded, with what emphatic reference to the testimony upon which it rests, does the Apostle introduce what he says upon it! "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, declare we unto you." As if he had said, It is no vision of

^x Heb. xii. 22, 23.

^y Heb. i. 14.

^z Eph. ii. 19.

^a Communion Service.

enthusiasm, no dream of the imagination, which we are presenting to you, but what rests upon the solid foundation of unquestionable testimony: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."^b

And yet, is not such a state as that which has been described—our fallen and earthly nature will still object—a state, is it not, too wonderful and excellent for us, and which we cannot attain unto? And most true it is, that, in ourselves, we could never have attained to it: "No man hath ascended up to Heaven."^c But the Apostle exhibits the Divine life *descending*—descending to us *from* Heaven:—"The life was *manifested*"—that he could say of it, "What we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled;" for that, in our own flesh and blood, it was manifested. We can no longer doubt the *practicability* of such a life, when we "look unto Jesus"—no, nor in our own case, when we remember that the same Divine Spirit, which was given "without measure" to *Him*, is, *in* measure, given to all who are his.—We can no longer doubt, as we look at Jesus, but that, within a tabernacle of flesh, may reside a spirit which lives *out* of the flesh and *above* it.—We can no longer doubt, but that while we dwell on earth, we may have "our conversation in Heaven." Not an action of the life of Jesus, not a temper did he discover, not a word did he utter, not a look do the Evangelists portray, not a movement,—no more, when he was surrounded and engaged with the multitude, than in his retreats with his chosen disciples,—but what bears the stamp of that his own character of himself, of the Son of Man, who was, at one and the same time, upon earth, and in Heaven!

But it is not, only, that in his life, as a model, is the *practicability* of such a life exhibited,—but what has he not, also, in that his descent from Heaven to earth, achieved for

^b John iii. 11.

^c John iii. 13.

us, to *render* it practicable! “God manifest in the flesh,”^d God approaching us in our own nature, *we* can approach! There is no longer a great gulf fixed between God and us. We can now hold communion with God, even through the same medium as that by which we converse one with another.

And is there no *encouragement* to approach, no *attraction* in the very *thought* of the Creator assuming the nature of his creatures, and of creatures who were alienated from him as we were? What must not be the disposition of God towards us! What the love and kindness of God towards man!

And when He *did* appear among us, what an exhibition of the Divine nature it was! For was there no beauty in him, that we should desire him? And is it not the same Jesus, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,”^e with whom it is for us, at this present moment, to hold communion?—no other, than when he had compassion upon the multitude,—than when he healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people,—no other than when “Jesus wept,”—than when his disciples were as brother, sister, mother to him,—than when, upon his apprehension, it was *their* danger, not his own, that engaged him,—he has at this moment,—(and when will he *cease* to have?) the same earnest solicitude for our happiness, the same tender sense of our infirmities, the same unutterable sympathy with our sorrows and sufferings! As Joseph—when, in his glory in Egypt, his bowels yearned upon his brethren—*represented* him:—it is with no other heart he has ascended to where he now is, than that which throbbed and melted with such love and compassion for us, and emptied all its veins to save us!

While so many obstacles that stood in the way have been

^d 1 Tim. iii. 16.

^e Heb. xiii. 8.

removed, and such facilities provided, by this the Divine assumption of our human nature, is there no *attraction*, moreover, (might we not well ask,) presented in it, to a life of such fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?

Or do we yet hold back? Do we yet shrink, as polluted creatures, from such near and intimate approaches to the high and holy God? Even when He thus *comes* to us, are we, with Peter, tempted to cry out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord?" And does he not, then, at this point also,—at this, if at any,—meet us, and re-assure us, even as when he said to the trembling disciple, "Simon, fear not?"^f "If we walk in the light, as God is in the light,"—for all the unevennesses of our walk,—for all that is of the earth which may yet adhere to it,—for all the defilement, which we may contract in it,—"the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Nay—not only does he accept our defiled services, admit our unworthy approaches "in the Beloved," but those who are farthest off, he brings thus "nigh," does he not? "by the blood of the Cross,"—receives rebels into his bosom,—confirmed sinners adopts as his beloved and blessed children,—takes them for companions for his saints and angels, and as his *own* companions for ever and ever!

So that, if it be a state of high and angelical advancement to which we are to attain, out of one of the lowest degradation, and, it may be, the deepest pollution; we may yet, through Him "who bore our sins in his own body on the tree," aspire and attain to it. He says to us in our sinful state, as to Jerusalem lying in ruins, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem: shake thyself from the dust; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!"^g

^f Luke v. 8—10.

^g Isa. lii. 1, 2.

And are we not encompassed with a "cloud of witnesses," men of like passions with ourselves, who *have* thus, through Him who strengthened them, shaken themselves from the dust of this world, loosed themselves from the bands that held them down, and mounted, as on angels' wings, to Heaven's gate, and lived, whilst in the flesh, upon this angels' food? Not to refer to the holy men, whose memorial is in the book of God, nor yet to saints of earlier times—can we think of some of those nearer our own age, and of our own country, who, if they shone as lights among men, fed their lamps in holy communion with God;—can we recal this and that venerated name, from among the lights and ornaments of our own church and country, and our hearts not burn within us to be enrolled in their ranks, and follow in the blessed track of their holy and heavenly lives?

No—it is not encouragement we want, nor yet attraction is it. But if the heart yet hold back, it is because it is chained down—because it loves the world, rather than God, loves darkness, rather than light.

Meanwhile, is the attempt made to lull the conscience with the outer shell and lifeless form of religion? But, "bring no more vain oblations,"^h saith the Lord:—For *vain* are they not—as if the empty purse were offered for payment? "Wherefore spend ye money for that which is not bread," do not we hear—and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"ⁱ For how long will the *dream* of satisfaction *last*? But will it not be, "as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and behold, he is empty: or, as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint!"^j The health, life, hope of the soul can be maintained, only, in "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

^h Isa. i. 13.

ⁱ Isa. lv. 2.

^j Isa. xxix. 8.

There are, however, other self-deceivers whom the Apostle had in view—those, who, though not strangers altogether to what is *spiritual-like*,—nay, who would fain think themselves to be partakers of this fellowship—yet discover tempers and dispositions which ill accord with it; who when they come down, as from the Mount, do not, in the relationships of ordinary life, present a face shining to others. For the ear of such, the Apostle writes, “This then is the message which we have received from him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” Or, what is the same thing, do any, whose life no better corresponds, take comfort to themselves from an imagined *trust in Christ*? It is when “we walk in the light, as God is in the light,” (they are here reminded,) that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

My brethren, who have not heard with the hearing of the ear only—“If a man love me, and keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,”—who, as you hear—“And truly *our fellowship* is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ,” have the witness within you, and confirmed by witness without you, that *yours* is,—you needed not to be told that it was “that our joy might be full,” the Apostle wrote these things for us. For if there be happiness to be found upon earth, it is in your bosom it is to be found! Not a work of your hands, not an exercise of your thoughts—I had almost said—but something of Heaven mingles with it, and makes it heavenly! and (the necessary allowance being made for human infirmity) may I *not* say it?—Are you in trouble? But as your blessed Master said of himself, “Ye shall leave me alone, yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me”^k—you are in trouble, and *not* in

^k John xvi. 32.

trouble, at one and the same time,—for are not the Father and the Son *with* you, in your trouble? Does the consciousness of failure,—of motives less unalloyed than you could wish—broken resolutions—the escapes of words and tempers which you would fain recall, disturb you—or recollections of the past? Yet you can lay your head upon your pillow, with a conscience clear as the noon-day: for “if we confess our sins,” while “we walk in the light as God is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” And what a prospect it is that is opening before you—when the communion that is now in its germ, shall have expanded into the fulness of communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ—when it will be no longer through mists and clouds, nor as “through a glass darkly” you will see, but “face to face”—when you will see him as he is, and will be yourself *like* him—when, as never upon *earth*, “the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed you, and lead you to living fountains of waters”^l—when you will take the place prepared for you, among angels and arch-angels, and the whole family of the redeemed, and be united to them in bonds—in bonds which no union approaches but that which subsists between the Father and the Son!

And was it without reason the Apostle said it, “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full?” And is it not for those who would be “*helpers* of your joy,” to put you in remembrance of such things, my brethren?

Yet I cannot conclude, without putting it to you, whether, in such a view of our holy and heavenly calling, we may not have cause, some of us, for deep humiliation? For though the life may not have been that of the *flesh*, it may yet have been no such life of fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; not as the life

^l Rev. vii. 17.

of those, whose "conversation is in Heaven." And is it for believers in Christ Jesus, to be thus "sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"—and shall a Christianity satisfy us, which has more of earth in it, than of Heaven? But, blessed be the God of all grace! no reason is there but that we should yet rise to our true level, at whatever distance we may have been from it. And shall it not be our holy ambition to rise to it, to "mount up with wings as eagles," or rather, as with *angels'* wings? Ah! if such be *not* our ambition, may it not be questionable whether we be believers at all?

I would add, however, another consideration—that if the Christian life consist in such communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, how watchful it concerns us to be, against whatsoever would *interrupt* the communion! For is there no danger, lest in our intercourse with the world, we be on our holy ground no longer—lest, in its gross atmosphere, our lamps burn dimly, if they do not go out—lest, instead of maintaining in it a spirit which is not *of* it, we insensibly contract its own? Is there no danger lest the salt, instead of communicating, lose its savour? There is no security for us,—and have we not learnt it from our own, and it may be afflicting, experience?—that if we would preserve the spirit which is of another world unimpaired, in its exposure to the influences of this; if we would preserve the mirror in which what is of Heaven is reflected, bright and untarnished, while the world breathes upon it, there is no other preservative and security for us, but that while we are engaged with our earthly calling, we should be concurrently and simultaneously prosecuting our heavenly one,—that at the same time that we attend to what demands our attention in the world, we should be in "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens, so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.^m

^m Collect for Ascension Day.

SERMON XII.

COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

PSALM cxxxiii.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity!

“It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments;

“As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

DAVID had had experience, if ever man had, of division and disunion. While he was yet a private individual, he was an object of jealousy in his own family,^a as well as to Saul.^b And when at last he came to the throne, for how long, ten of the tribes remained separated from the two over which he reigned at Hebron!^c And what a rent there was made between *brethren*, as well as between father and son, by the rebellion of Absalom!^d And scarce had he returned from the exile into which he had been driven by that monster of a son, when jealousy breaks out anew, among the tribes, and the signal is given for another revolt,—“To thy tents, O Israel!”^e

^a 1 Sam. xvii. 28. ^b 1 Sam. xviii. 8, 9. ^c 2 Sam. iii. 1.

^d 2 Sam. xv.

^e 2 Sam. xx. 1.

Good and pleasant must it have been, in no ordinary degree, to one who had passed through such troubled waters as those through which David had passed, to have seen “brethren dwelling together in unity.”

Ah! and if we want *contrast*, to set off the charm of such union, is there not more than enough of it to be found, at all times, in this jarring world—in which “wars and fightings” are breaking out so perpetually, “from the lusts that war in our members”^f—in which no condition of life has an exemption—in which the bosom of a family, instead of being the abode of peace and love, is so often the scene of discord and contention;—where each seeks to please *himself*—where the loud voice, and the dark scowl, too plainly discover what spirit they are of—where the imperious tone of authority, on the one hand, and the air of heartless service, on the other, bespeak “a house divided against itself”^g—where religion itself, it may be, instead of promoting harmony, makes “a man’s foes those of his own household:”^h we may have seen, at what we sighed out as we saw it, “Better a dinner of herbs, where *love* is, than a stalled ox,” with domestic dissension!

And yet, is any *foil* wanting, to make us chime in with the Psalmist, “How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity?” To express something of what he felt to be the charm of it, he makes use of two comparisons.

Pleasant is it, says he, as was the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, which ran down, in its stream of fragrance, to the skirts of his garments. For is it not as sweetest perfume through the house, when those who dwell in it, “dwell together in unity?” When that house in Bethany was filled with the odour of the precious ointmentⁱ

^f James iv. 1.

^h Matt. x. 36.

^g Mark iii. 25.

ⁱ John xii. 3.

of the broken alabaster box, a yet *more* fragrant odour was breathing from the love and union of hearts in that house.

It is "as the dew of Hermon," says the Psalmist, "and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." As when, after the scorching heat of a Syrian summer day, the dew began to fall upon those mountains, the air breathed balm, instead of fire; *such* the balmy atmosphere, thought he,—in the place of one charged with fiery tempers and stormy passions,—which they breathe who "dwell together in unity!"

Oh! say,—is it *not* good and pleasant—in *domestic* life, for example, (to reverse the picture)—to see the members of the same household living as members one of another, all drawing together in love, interested in one another's welfare, caring for one another's happiness, tender to one another's infirmities, bearing one another's burdens;—to see, as the precious ointment trickling down from the head to the lowest skirts, the same spirit breathing from the highest to the humblest station;—to see them living in the continual interchange of kind offices, and kind words, and kind looks; meeting one another, as brethren; if one member suffer, all suffering with that member; if one rejoice, all rejoicing together:—*this* is what the Gospel of peace and love would introduce into our houses, this sunshine within doors, I had almost said, without a cloud!—this sweet harmony of "brethren dwelling together in unity!"

It is what the *Gospel*, I say, would introduce into our houses. For we are not to suppose, (need I say it?) that union like this, is of the growth of *nature*, that we are to look to *natural* amiablenesses for it. Oh no!—Though the soul should be cast in the softest mould, and the dispositions be the gentlest and sweetest imaginable, yet, if there be nothing *more* to depend upon,—let *self* be opposed and thwarted, let there come a conflict of interests, or the pro-

vocation of injury—and we are not to be startled, though the fine-toned instrument of *nature* should set the ears on edge!

From the two comparisons that the Psalmist uses, we may learn what is the *source* of the blessed union, as well as the nature of it.

For what did the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, which ran down to the skirts of his garment, represent, but that Divine Spirit, who, in the likeness of a dove, descended upon the High Priest of whom the anointed Aaron was the type, and descends from him to his whole Body? It is as we are led by the Spirit of *Christ*, and not by our own, that “brethren dwell together in unity.” It is when, under the influence of the Spirit of *holiness*, “we walk in the light, as God is in the light,” that “we have fellowship one with another,”^j says the Apostle.

The same thing is signified by the other comparison. “As the dew tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men;”^k is not the production of the labour of man, but distils upon the earth from above;—to a *like* original is this union to be traced. It is as the promise is fulfilled, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground,”^l that “instead of the brier comes up the myrtle-tree.”^m

It was in the prospect of an union to be derived from such a source, that the Prophet drew that picture, which, without such an explanation, or found elsewhere, might have been thought to have been drawn by the hand of a dreaming visionary, rather than of an inspired Prophet—that “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid,”ⁿ that those of the most opposite dispositions and characters by nature, should yet live together in perfect

^j 1 John i. 7.

^k Micah v. 7.

^l Isa. xlv. 3.

^m Isa. lv. 13.

ⁿ Isa. xi. 6.

harmony, through grace: for that upon Him who was about to spring from "the stem of Jesse," that Divine Spirit should rest,^o under whose influence, as many as came under it should be animated by a love, such as God himself was about to manifest—should "put on bowels of mercies," corresponding to the mercy of which they were about to be the objects.

And what a fulfilment there was of the prophecy, and what an exhibition of the union, when, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit, which our ascended High-Priest had received for us, was communicated to the Body, and "all who believed were of one heart and one soul!"^p

In the event which we commemorated last Sunday^q—that of the gift of the Holy Ghost, sent down from Heaven, to dwell upon earth—we have at once the seal of our reconciliation with God, and the bond of union between man and man. As in the mystery which is the object of our adoring faith to-day^r—that of the Trinity of Divine persons in the unity of the Divine essence—while, (according to the prayer, in his mediatorial character, of one of the Divine persons, that we might be one, as they are,^s) we are shown the *pattern* of the unity to be produced among ourselves, there is presented to us, as in the same prayer—"that they may be one, in us"^t—the *root*, also, of the union between man and man. Unity among *brethren* is no other than the stamp, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, upon the human heart, of the *Trinity* in unity.

We have had before us, then, my brethren, in following out the two comparisons of the Psalmist, whence the union comes, as well as what it is. But *where* is it? *where* is such union? where is this oneness of heart and soul?

Was it then, as when some spring-days come out of

^o Isa. xi. 1, 2.

^p Acts iv. 32.

^q Whit-Sunday.

^r Trinity Sunday.

^s John xvii. 21.

^t John xvii. 21.

course, in the depth of winter, and there is a premature blow in our gardens; but, presently, the flowers which had begun to peep and open, are repelled by the returning winter rigour?

And yet, even in this wintry world, is there not enough of sunshine, while we have the promise of the same Divine Spirit to create another, and a *perpetual* such blow, in the garden of the Lord? Beyond a doubt there is, were it not for those gathering clouds, and dense fogs, which steam from our own unsubdued lusts and corruptions, to intercept the sunshine. No other reason is there, why the garden of the Lord,—whatever thorns and thistles the ground about it may yet bring forth,—should not blossom all over, should not be one sheet of flower! No other reason is there why that remark of former times should not be, and *as far* as the church has since extended itself, renewed in our own, “See how those Christians love one another!”

What is it, then, for us to do? What, but as those who would be led uniformly by the Spirit of Christ, and not by their own, and waiting, as in that upper-chamber, with continual prayer and supplication for his Spirit—“to put off,” as the grace is given us, “the old man” with its churlish tempers, “and put on the new man”^u with its gracious ones;—to put off that nature which seeks its *own*, and put on the large and generous affections of the other;—to put off the jealousies, and suspicions, and irritabilities of the one, and put on that which “is not easily provoked,” which “thinketh no evil,”^v—the charity of the other;—to put off “the pride by which cometh contention,”^w and to be “clothed with the humility,”^x by which “others are esteemed better than ourselves:”^y to “put on,” in a word, (for to what less does the being swayed and governed by the Spirit of

^u Ephes. iv. 22, 24. ^v 1 Cor. xiii. 5. ^w Prov. xiii. 10.

^x 1 Pet. v. 5.

^y Phil. ii. 3.

Christ amount?) to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”^z himself, (as the Apostle speaks,) as those, who, through the Holy Ghost given to them, are made partakers of the Divine nature—to be satisfied with no humbler attainment than that of having “the same mind formed in us, which was also in Christ Jesus?”^a

We shall have to wait no longer for another, and a full blow, (not the partial and imperfect one which we see, at present,) of those balm-breathing plants of the garden of the Lord which came out, with such luxuriance, on the day of Pentecost.

Shall we?—what, when self, that root of all *disunion*, has been supplanted and replaced by the self-renouncing spirit of Christ! As “Christ pleased not himself,”^b neither will those, in whom is the mind of Christ. Even as on the day of Pentecost, all things will be again—if not, as then, in community of property, yet no less truly, in the spirit which prompted it—“all things” will be again “common.”^c A chain of common sympathy will bind us together, as one family. The sorrows of one will be the sorrows of all, and the joys of one will be the joys of all.

Nor is this blossoming of the garden of the Lord, (to continue the figure,) it is not like that of the flowers of the earth, beautiful, but evanescent. What do we read at the conclusion of the psalm—a part of it, which, if any, is not to be neglected by us? For what can fill up the cup of immortal beings, like ourselves, but what has the stamp of their own immortality upon it? Where such union is, there, says the Psalmist, as upon Mount Zion, typically, “the Lord commanded his blessing, even *life for evermore!*”

As many as are united in Christ (not by *natural* affec-

^z Rom. xiii. 14.

^a Phil. ii. 5.

^b Rom. xv. 3.

^c Acts ii. 44.

tion, only,) are united in indissoluble bonds. Is one taken? Sharp as may be the pang of separation, and deep the sense of bereavement, great as the blank which has been made may be felt to be; yet the relation which there is between the members of the body of Christ, (though some of them may have joined the spirits of the just made perfect, while others remain in their earthly tabernacle,) is not interrupted—nor will the personal separation be for more than a season. The union that is formed in Christ, is formed for eternity!

Shall we then content ourselves, any of us, with concurring in *sentiment* with the Psalmist (such concurrence must needs be universal!) that “it is a good and pleasant thing for brethren to dwell together in unity?” But while there is the promise for us, of the same heart-and-soul-uniting Spirit, shall we be satisfied without dwelling in such unity, ourselves?

Let it be remembered, however, that, while we wait in all prayer and supplication for the Spirit, it is with the *Word*, also, continually before us, we are to wait for the Divine influences. For that it is, as he is the Spirit of *Truth*, he is the author of peace and concord: “seeing that you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren,”^d says the Apostle. It is an union, not like that of the four hundred prophets of Ahab, whom *a lying* spirit united;^e—nor yet one which is the result of the subjugation of the mind to *authority*, and of a restraint upon its free exercise of itself: no—“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty!*”^f It is, as the eyes of the understanding are being *enlightened*,—not by *putting them out*;—while the mind ranges over the whole field of truth, seeks of the Spirit to be guided into *all* truth;—in proportion as we are so guided and enlightened,

^d 1 Pet. i. 22.^e 1 Kings xxii. 6, 23.^f 2 Cor. iii. 17.

as we are taught more and more of the truth as it is in Jesus by "the Spirit of truth," heart is drawn to heart, more and more: nay, in proportion as we are so taught,—the beams of truth dispelling the mists of prejudice and passion,—we are "joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."^g It is not because we are taught too much, but because we are taught too little,—too little, however, as the *Spirit* teaches,—that those who assert and exercise this their Christian liberty, do not more uniformly "speak the same thing;" but that, to the discredit of their principles, there are so many divisions among them: and the remedy for such divisions is to be found, not in the subjection of the mind to authority, but in the greater subjection of it to truth.

While we wait, then, with continual prayer and supplication for the Spirit, we are to wait, as not expecting those his influences which bind us together in unity to descend upon us, except through the medium of *the Word*. With respect indeed to the operations of the Holy Spirit, *universally*,—as, to exercise the mind upon the Word, without dependence upon the teaching of the Spirit, is rationalism; so to expect the illumination of the Spirit, without the light of the word, is enthusiasm. It was as the Apostle was announcing in the house of Cornelius "Him to whom gave all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins," that the Holy Ghost fell upon them,—fell, as it is emphatically added, "upon all them *that heard the Word*."^h And where, but in the Word, is that Divine character delineated, to which, according to what has been observed, it so much concerns us, as we would dwell together in unity, to conform our own? Is it not, as we there "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image by the Spirit of the Lord?"ⁱ

^g 1 Cor. i. 10.

^h Acts x. 43, 44.

ⁱ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

We have now had before us, my brethren, what the union, so good and pleasant, is in itself,—from what source it is derived,—and by what means it is to be attained. And shall we *neglect* the means of attaining it? What! and when, through “Him, to whom give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins,” the *past*, (with whatever of a contrary spirit our past history may upbraid us,) all the past is, to whosoever believeth in Jesus, as though it had never been: so that those whom we hear described, as having lived “in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another,”^j—as soon as “the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man” broke in upon them, relieved in conscience, as well as renewed in nature, came to love one another, even as Christ loved them! And would we not become what *they* became, ourselves? Yes, and promote among brethren, in families, among relations, among those of the same neighbourhood, of the same church, of the same country,—nay, among the whole family of mankind, (as in the prayer of the Litany, “among all nations,”) seek to promote “unity, peace, and concord?” For, would we not be among those “peacemakers,” who “shall be called the children of God?”^k

Let me add, that if it be for us, at one time more than at another, to be thus “kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love,”^l is it not after having received, as we have but now, many of us, the renewed assurances and pledges of Christ’s love to us? For was it not, as he was about to institute that *memorial* of his love to us, that he gave that his own commandment to his disciples, that they should love one another, even as He had loved them? Nay, is it not the declared design of the Divine institution, as “we, being many, are all partakers of that one bread,”^m that we

^j Titus iii. 3, &c.

^l Rom. xii. 10.

^k Matt v. 9.

^m 1 Cor. x. 17.

should be confirmed by it in the relation in which we stand one to another, as well as in our relation to our Lord—that we should thus grow up, as members one of another, as well as of himself?

And when we think, by what a communion with the whole Body, as well as with the Head of it, these our sacramental communions will be *succeeded*;—as we look forward to that gathering together in one, where love will be all in all, where self will be annihilated, where “not my will, but thine be done,” will be the language of every heart, where the sunshine will be, indeed, without a cloud, and the harmony without a discord, where thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand will be “of one heart and one soul,”—is it not for us, in the prospect of forming part of that choir of Heaven, to be as those whose souls are attuned to the heavenly melody *already*, as who are dwelling together in that unity *now*, upon which the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore? O yes—of whom was it the Saviour said it, that he would, they should “behold his glory,”ⁿ but of those, for whom his prayer had been, that they might be one, as He and the Father are one?

And oh! that that prayer, offered up, as it was, for as many as in *after-times* should believe on him, as well as for those who were the immediate objects of it, may be answered for all of us, who believe on him, and who, as such, were the objects of it, in the gift of such a measure of his Spirit, that we may dwell together, in some approximation to the unity of Heaven upon earth, and in the unity itself for ever and ever!

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may

ⁿ John xvii. 24

through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of unity and godly love, to the honour and praise of thy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

SERMON XIII.

THE REFUGE.

ISAIAH XXV. 4.

“For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.”

THE life of the Christian is a life of continual need, and of need continually supplied—of weakness and of strength—of exposure to danger, and protection from it. His condition, in this world, has been not unaptly compared to the rainbow. Clouds, it may be dark clouds, may roll over him; but be the cloud never so dark, the sun shines upon it—there is the bow in the cloud.

It is this our *rainbow*-like condition, my brethren, that is presented to us in the passage which has been now read. There is, on the one hand, the storm, and the scorching heat; on the other, a shadow from the heat, and a refuge from the storm.

The comparisons which are used would sound yet more expressive, were we familiar with the climate that suggested them,—in which, according to the accounts of travellers, such is often the fury of the storm, that, as soon as it comes

on, those who are exposed to it will, in order to be less at its mercy, throw themselves upon the ground, and thrust their heads into the sand: and so intense the heat, that it is not uncommon to see the camel and other cattle drop down dead under it. From the complaint of Jonah, when, after the withering of the gourd, which had been a shadow over him, the sun beat upon his unprotected head, "that he fainted, and wished in himself to die,"^a we may form some conception of the insupportable blaze of an eastern sun.

Accordingly, to describe any grievous affliction, an overwhelming calamity, illustrations from the rushing storm, and the overpowering heat, are in frequent use in Scripture: as in the fourth chapter of this book, at the last verse, "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain:" as again in the thirty-second chapter and at the second verse, "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." In the parable of the sower, one of the symbols is accompanied with the interpretation, in which the sun, which scorches the blade springing up in the shallow ground, is explained to be, "the tribulation, or persecution which ariseth because of the word."^b As again, in the seventh chapter of the book of Revelation, it is promised to those "who came out of great tribulation," that "the sun should no more light on them, nor any heat." If we yet want such a key to the signification of the *storm*, we have only to turn to such a passage as that in another chapter of Isaiah, "Behold! the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, shall cast down to the earth with the hand."^c

But to bring what is in the text home to ourselves—let

^a Jonah iv. 8.

^b Matt. xiii. 6, 21.

^c Isa. xxviii. 2.

us consider the particular trials and afflictions which are thus described; as also the relief, on the other hand, which "the refuge from the storm, and the shadow from the heat" are designed to represent to us.

The Prophet seems to have had immediately in view, the calamities which were coming upon his country from Babylon, and the Divine interposition, in the judgment which was to be executed upon their oppressors. The city spoken of in the second verse, which was to become a ruin and a heap, is Babylon.

But, in truth, from the time when the children of Israel were in the furnace of Egypt, and the oppression of Pharaoh was "as a storm against the wall," and that the Lord their God, with a mighty hand and stretched out arm, brought them out from their iron bondage, what is their history but a perpetual repetition of like afflictions, and like deliverances!

When the army of Sennacherib was at the gates of Jerusalem, and those words of rebuke and blasphemy, in the mouth of Rabshakeh, were "as a storm against the wall;"—in the answer that was sent to Hezekiah, when he had spread the letter of defiance before the Lord, and besought the intercession of Isaiah—"For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake"^d—what a refuge they had from the storm, and shadow from the heat! Jerusalem was a city too strong for the invincible Sennacherib, when it had "*salvation*, for walls and bulwarks!"^e

Or, to bring the words yet nearer to ourselves, see them verified individually, as well as nationally.

Hear the complaint in the thirtieth chapter of the book of Job: at one time, "Terrors are turned upon me; they pursue my soul, as *the wind*:"—at another, "My skin is black

^d 2 Kings xix. 34.

^e Isa. xxvi. 1.

upon me, my bones are *burned with heat*."—Meanwhile,—Job "knows that his Redeemer liveth!"^f

Or, let us place ourselves by the side of Nebuchadnezzar, at the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, when (as we read in the third chapter of Daniel,) the king astonished, rises up, and says to his counsellors, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."^g Such a shadow had they from the heat, that when they came out from the midst of the fire, not a hair of their head was singed, nor had the smell of fire passed upon them!

Or, hear the Psalmist, "All thy waves and storms have gone over me!" or, when he says, "my strength is dried up like a potsherd"—"my moisture is turned into the drought of summer!" But was it less frequent upon his lips—"Thou art my refuge!"^h

Or, not to confine ourselves to Scripture history, hear Luther—hear him, as often as he sees the storm coming on, adopting the Psalmist's own triumphant strain, "Though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea," "I will fear no evil—for thou art with me!"ⁱ

Or, to come back to Scripture, turn to the fourth chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, where we read, at the thirty-seventh verse, "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And Jesus was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?—And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still—And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." But whether it was calm or

^f Job xix. 25.

^g Dan. iii. 24, 25.

^h Psalms xlii. xxii. xxxii. cxlii.

ⁱ Psalms xlvi. xxiii.

tempestuous, while they had Jesus in the ship with them, the words were as applicable to themselves, (were they not?) as to the sea,—“Peace, be still!”

Or, is it sin, is it the sting of sin, agony of conscience, that is “the storm against the wall?” And truly, if there be anything to render affliction insupportable, it is when it is embittered and envenomed by the consciousness of sin. Yet he who says, “Mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head in number”—“My wickednesses are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear!” could say, also, “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;”—could speak of himself as the “blessed man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.”^j For has not One come between the naked, defenceless sinner, and the storm that was about to crush him, and sustained *himself* the brunt and fury of the storm? Has he not placed between our sin, and the sentence pronounced upon it, the “shadow” of his “propitiation for our sins?”

Or is the blast of the terrible ones, the approach of the King of Terrors himself—Is terrible Death approaching? But what is death, without its sting—what the King of Terrors, disarmed of his terror! What was it to him, who, while his persecutors were gnashing upon him with their teeth, and stoning him with stones, could calmly look up, and say, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”^k

Or to look beyond death—“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment.”^l—But for those for whom it will then be to hear, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you!”^m what terror will there be in the Day of Judgment itself? It is true—an account will then be to be rendered of all the

^j Psalms xl. xxxviii. xxxii.

^k Acts vii. 59.

^l Heb. ix. 27.

^m Matt. xxv. 34.

works done, and of all the time spent, in the body. But “who is he that condemneth” those for whom Christ intercedes? It is true—“The Heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, and the earth, with the works that are therein, will be burnt up :”ⁿ but as—when, on the morning on which the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre, in which the body of Jesus had been laid, appalled with the earthquake, “became as dead men for fear,” the angel said to the women, “Fear not *ye*, for I know that ye seek Jesus ;”^o—even so, in the day when the earthquake will shake the Heavens, as well as the earth, when all nature will be in convulsion, while the elements are melting, the stars falling, the earth burning, the pillars of the universe shaking,—in the midst of the universal wreck and dissolution of all things, it will be for those, who in this the accepted time, in this the day of salvation, *sought Jesus*—it will be for them to hear, “Fear not!”—There is nothing for them to fear, who have in Him, in whom they have believed, a refuge from it all :—We shall have “boldness,” (does not the Apostle say?) “in the day of judgment.”^p

What is it not then to be a Christian! While those who are so only in *name* are exposed, naked and defenceless, to all the storms of life, and to the yet more terrible storm that is gathering beyond this life, the real Christian has a refuge from every storm. “Many,” it is true, “are the afflictions of the righteous ; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all,”^q—and sustaineth him *in* them all.—It is according to that description of him in the seventeenth chapter of Jeremiah, “Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is ! For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and which spreadeth out her

ⁿ 2 Pet. iii. 10 ;

^p 1 John iv. 17.

^o Matt. xxviii. 2—5.

^q Psa. xxxiv. 19.

roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green."

My Christian brethren, go the round, if you will, of all the trials to which we are subject.—Is it that the blessing of health is taken, that a man is the prey of consuming disease—or that a blank is made in the bosom of our family, that tender ties are severed—or, are long-cherished hopes disappointed—are our prospects in life blasted—or, have we received injuries from those to whom we gave no provocation—have we met with ingratitude from those who were under obligations to us—or do we experience unkindness from friends, it may be, from those of our own household—or are the hopes of parents clouded over? But in all such trials, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! you have in your Divine Saviour, "a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat!"

Or is it the trial of scoffings and cruel mockings that you have to encounter? Does faithfulness to your Saviour subject you to opposition and persecution from those who are opposed to himself? But what, though it be so! You remember, when he who had been recovered from his blindness was cast out of the synagogue, for bearing testimony to him to whom he owed his recovery;—as soon as "Jesus heard that they had cast him out," "he found him," (did he not?) and added to the sight which he had already bestowed upon him, the revelation of *himself!*"^r If it be for any to apply the promise, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," but "in me ye shall have peace,"^s it is for those who are content to suffer shame for his name!

Or, is the trial, your participation in the trials of the Church—your participation and sympathy in the disunion, the corruptions, the degradation, of Christ's Church—as though "by the waters of Babylon you sat down and

^r John ix. 35—37.

^s John xvi. 33.

wept?" But though the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth, "I am with you always,"^t does he not say? And they will not *always* prophesy in sackcloth. The day is coming, when, as in the concluding verse of the last chapter, "The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his antients, gloriously!"

Or is it—ah! is it the recollection of a mis-spent life, that comes between you and your peace? But there is One who is ready to come between you and that mis-spent life, if you seek his mediation. Is he not? Hear only such a passage as that in the forty-third chapter of this book,—“Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins; Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.” What might we now expect to hear? “I will make *thee* to serve, I will weary *thee* with my *judgments*”—might we not? But what *do* we hear? “I, even I, am he that *blotteth out* thy transgressions”—and, “for mine own sake” (without any reference to any merits or demerits of yours) or, in the language of our fuller revelation—for Christ’s sake! As surely as you look to “God in Christ reconciling sinners unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,”^u *your* trespasses will not be imputed to *you*—the reconciliation extends to *you*.

Nay, and though it should have been your object to serve God from your youth, yet, under the consciousness of “sins, negligences, and ignorances,” of resolutions not kept, of duties not performed, of opportunities not improved, you may be at times ready to sink: but “if we walk in the light, as God is in the light”—if it be your object so to walk—notwithstanding the failures and shortcomings with which you have to reproach yourself, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth you from all sin.”^v

^t Rev. xi. 3, and Matt. xxviii. 20. ^u 2 Cor. v. 19. ^v 1 John i. 7.

Or, is the strength of the corruptions with which you have to contend, as a storm against the wall? Are you tempted to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But is it not for you to add, Christian, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ?" Is there not "the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, to set you free from the law of sin and death?"^w

Might not the Apostle well exclaim, as he does in the first chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation!"

Ah! and why is it we are exposed, as we are, to the storm, but that we may be made sensible of the need we have of a refuge from it? If the sun be of a scorching temperature, it is to make us feel our need of a shadow from it. It is not in calm weather, but when it blows a gale, the sailor shouts, as the harbour comes in view. Troubles are sent to *drive* us to Him, in whom there is a very present help in time of trouble.

But I would add, (in continuation of the last passage referred to, "Blessed be the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation")—"that *we* may be able" (as the Apostle proceeds,) "that we may be able to comfort those that are in any trouble, with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."^x For one of the ways in which He comforts us, is, by making us comforters one of another. He would have us to be, one to another, what He is to ourselves. As Elihu said to Job, "I am in God's stead to you,"^y it is for Christians to be in Christ's stead to their fellow-Christians;—to be what Job was, when he "delivered the poor that cried, and the

^w Rom. vii. 24, 25, and viii. 2.

^x 2 Cor. i. 4.

^y Job xxxiii. 6.

fatherless, and him that had none to help him ;” when “ the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy ;”^z—to be what he desired to be, when he would have strengthened those with his mouth who were heaping up their words against him ;—to be, what the Apostle would have us to be, when he directs us to “ bear one another’s burdens ;”^a—to be, what the members of the early Church were, one to another, when “ none said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own :”^b the Saviour would have us to be, in our measure, one to another, even as himself—“ a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat.” It is this that was meant by his commandment to his disciples, when he was going away from them, to love one another, as He had loved them—that they should be one to another, what He had been to them—that they should supply his place, one to another, in his absence—that each should be to the other, brother to brother, a representative of Himself.

And shall we not, then, my Christian brethren, employ whatever advantages we possess, whether we have this world’s good, or the better things of grace, for the alleviation of the trials, and the promotion of the present and everlasting happiness of those around us? Need I add, that those who stand in particular relations one to another,—that husband and wife, fathers and mothers, the sons and daughters of tried parents, elder brothers and elder sisters, masters and mistresses, landlords, and those in an upper class of life, such as have youth under their care, or others dependent upon them, are under obligations commensurate with their opportunities, or rather (should I not say?) have a providential *privilege* afforded them, to

^z Job xxix. 12, 13.

^a Gal. vi. 2.

^b Acts iv. 32.

be a "refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat," to those to whom they stand in such relations.

Let me, however, remind you, my brethren, that it is not the existence of such privileges for us, but our use of them, that will make them to be of any value to us;—that it is by faith in exercise, not inactive faith, we place ourselves *under* the shadow—that the refuge becomes a refuge to ourselves. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."^c The strong tower is there: but before we can enjoy the protection and security of it, we must run into it—with the feet of *faith*: as we see the Psalmist doing continually:—as in the seventeenth Psalm, for example, (to refer to one passage out of a thousand,) he was not content with knowing that there was such a hiding-place for him, but on the wing of faith he *flies* into it—he *prays* that his God would hide him: he prays, "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings:" or, as in the opening of the fifty-seventh Psalm, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee." See faith in exercise—"yea, in the shadow of thy wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities be over-past." Or, as in the Liturgy, we have examples without number: as in the second morning collect, for instance,—"Defend us," (we pray,) "in all assaults of our enemies, that we, *surely trusting* in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries." To have such privileges within our reach, is one thing; to have the enjoyment and benefit of them, another. "Having therefore such a High-priest," says the Apostle—it is not for us to content ourselves with *the having* the all-prevailing High-priest—but "let us *come*," (as he directs us,) "come to the throne of grace," that we may, through him, obtain

^c Prov. xviii. 10.

the mercy, and find the grace which there is for us, to help in time of need." ^d

But I cannot satisfy myself, without making some application of the subject, (as I would desire to do of every subject,) to the younger part, also, of the congregation. Yet, in the bright morning of life, it seems as if it would be always bright—as though a text, like this, were for others, not for you. And yet, is the morning without clouds, followed always by an unclouded day? Though the sea should be as glass, when the young sailor first embarks, is he to expect, therefore, that it will be calm weather always—that he shall pass his seafaring life without a storm? Ah! no less surely than the sailor, will you, my dear young friends, if you grow up, want a harbour to put into. Nay—Is very childhood without its troubles, or without its sins? And, therefore, "Suffer little children to come unto me," ^e says the Saviour, as those who have need of him, as well as any others.

Would that I could think there were none present, who had not part in the blessedness! And can it be, that any are content to *continue* without having part in it? No reason they should, be they who or what they may. That blessed Being who came between our sinful race, and the judgment hanging over us, sustaining it himself for us, will as surely, if you cast yourself upon him, stand between you and that judgment. Do you not hear him? For is he not at this moment saying it to us—when is he not?—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden,"—though it be with the load of *sin* you are heavy-laden,—“and I will give you rest” ^f—in the *forgiveness* of sin:—for what rest is there without this?

And then—sin forgiven—in all trials and troubles, as the affrighted child runs into the arms of its mother—you

^d Heb. iv. 16.

^e Mark x. 14.

^f Matt. xi. 28.

will have the everlasting arms to run into, crying, Abba, Father! Come what may—"in all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment—Good Lord, deliver us," will be no vain prayer: you will have in an Almighty Redeemer "a refuge from the storm," be it what it may,—“a shadow from the heat,” though it be that of a burning world!



SERMON XIV.

THE EUNUCH OF ETHIOPIA.

Acts viii. 39.

“ And he went on his way rejoicing.”

THE circumstances were these—Though the passage be a familiar one, yet, that it may be, in all the particulars, present to your minds, my brethren, I would read the whole of it, from the twenty-sixth verse. “ And the angel of the Lord and he went on his way rejoicing.” The eunuch of Ethiopia went on his way *rejoicing!*

And so did the jailor of Philippi, who, a little while before, was on the point of committing self-murder: we find him, too, rejoicing!^a And so did the inhabitants of Samaria, (as we read in this same chapter,) among whom such deeds of darkness had been practised—“ There was great joy in that city !” And so did the three thousand, of whom we read in the second chapter—“ They did eat their meat with *gladness!*”

Whence this so great joy? From the only source, my brethren, from which true joy ever yet sprang up, in the heart of man. All other, (apart, however, from this,) is hollow: “ As the crackling of thorns”—as it is said to be: it may make a noise and a blaze—and goes out. Nay, in

^a Acts xvi. 34.

the midst of which, says the wise man,—and does not our own experience say it, as well as the wise man, when we have *had* anything of experience,—that in the midst of the “crackling” joy, there is often heaviness ?

The source of *this* joy was, that Jesus—that “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, that his life was taken from the earth,” for our iniquities, for our transgressions—that “the chastisement of our peace was upon him—that with His stripes we are healed.”^b For though, according to what we heard last Sunday,^c they may well mourn, and, as surely as the Spirit of grace is poured out upon them, *will* mourn, who “look upon him whom they pierced ;” yet He, in his infinite love, would have us to *rejoice* rather, that when He was pierced *by* us, he was pierced *for* us.

The Ethiopian rejoiced, in being reconciled to God, in being restored to the favour of God, through faith in the blood of the Lamb of God. He had “joy and peace in believing.” He could now think of, and feel towards God, as a child feels towards a loving parent. He could look up, and say, “Abba, Father.” It was as if those words were sounding in his ears, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee!”^d He could go on his way, in the sweet assurance that all things would work together, that all the events of his future life would be ordered for his good ; for that his sins were forgiven him, and God had lifted up the light of his countenance upon him.

And had he not become acquainted with One, who not only died to make reconciliation, but who also “for ever liveth, making intercession for us,”—One, who, if he should sin again, was his “Advocate with the Father ;” if he prayed, was his High-priest, to offer up his prayers : he had become acquainted with One, who is “able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him, seeing he

^b Isa. liii. 5.

^c On Zech. xii. 10.

^d Matt. ix. 2.

for ever liveth to make intercession for them."^e As in the hymn of the morning, he could

“ Sing of his dying love,
Sing of his rising power,
Sing how he intercedes above,
For those whose sins he bore.”

And had he not, through his faith in Him, received also of his own Divine Spirit, to reduce all into peace and harmony within—to establish that kingdom of God within him, which is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?”^f

And though darker dispensations should be appointed him, and that his sunnier hours might, at times, be clouded over, he had discovered where the oppressed heart can find relief, which the world cannot give—what can light up the house of mourning—could make him, “though sorrowful,” still “always rejoicing.”^g

And if he looked beyond—beyond the present scene of existence—it was with a hope, with the hope of the full enjoyment of that, of which he had now the earnest: it was to a rest, to which the peace which he was enjoying, was introductory only—“the rest which remaineth for the people of God :”^h it was to awake up after the likeness, to be admitted into the presence, to behold the glory, of Christ: to be where Christ is, and *as* he is—to be for ever with the Lord, and like Himself—to be, where there will be no need of the sun, nor of the moon, where there is “fulness of joy in the presence of the Lord, and pleasures for evermore at his right hand”ⁱ—to be, where there will be “no more pain, nor crying, nor sorrow, nor death, where God will wipe away all tears from all faces.”^j Oh! the

^e Heb. vii. 25.

^f Rom. xiv. 17.

^g 2 Cor. vi. 10.

^h Heb. iv. 9.

ⁱ Psal. xvi. 11.

^j Rev. xxi. 4.

hope which springs out of faith in Christ! And had he not then reason to go on his way rejoicing?

And can we forbear to *follow* him on his way, and to the end of his journey? Did Cornelius, when Peter was coming to him, assemble together his kinsmen and near friends, that they also might hear the words by which they might be saved?^k Was the Gadarene, out of whom the devils departed, directed to return to his own house, and show what great things God had done for him?^l Was Peter directed, when he should be converted, to strengthen his brethren?^m Did those who were scattered abroad, after the death of Stephen, go telling of Jesus wheresoever they went?ⁿ And can we not hear, out of the mouth of this man of Ethiopia, as though we read of it, the good tidings of great joy, proclaimed in his own country, and see him now, also, rejoicing in seeing his countrymen believing in the same Saviour, and partakers of his joy? For would not his heart burn to tell them how God loved them—that the Son of God had died for them—to tell them the words by which they might be saved? Do we not seem to see, through his exertions, the prophecy in a course of accomplishment, already, and “Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God?”^o

And whence was this to him? Wherefore was this man so highly favoured? Nay! an angel was sent from Heaven on his account! Philip was interrupted in his successful ministry among the Samaritans to go to meet him! Wherefore was all this done for him, this especial favour shown him? No other reason is assigned for it, my brethren, but what is equally applicable to ourselves: no reason for which *he* was so highly favoured, but for which *we* may be as highly favoured, also. What we read of, in the instance

^k Acts x. 24.

^l Mark v. 19.

^m Luke xxii. 32.

ⁿ Acts viii. 4.

^o Psa. lxviii. 31.

of this man of Ethiopia, is no more than the accomplishment of the promise made to all, "Seek and ye shall find."^p

And we may depend upon it, that if we do *not* find—if we do not find favour and reconciliation with God—if, sooner or later, we do not find joy and peace, such as *he* found, it is only because we do not seek it.—Seek, after a manner, we may: as we read, that "many will seek to enter in, who shall not be able."^q Seek unsuccessfully, after a manner, men may; but are they then seeking as did the Ethiopian?

What is meant by seeking, in Scripture, we learn in the second chapter of the book of Proverbs; for example, where the promise runs, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;" if a man search for *Heavenly* treasures, as others do for *earthly* treasures, *then*—the promise is—then thou shalt *find*. Or as we heard in the first lesson for the morning, "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thine heart and with all thy soul."^r

It was thus, we shall perceive, this man of Ethiopia was "seeking goodly pearls," and he "found the pearl of great price."^s That Divine Redeemer was revealed to him, his faith in whom made him go on his way rejoicing.

He is introduced to us thus—"Behold! a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority, under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning."

The extraordinary favour, I say, which was shown this

^p Matt. vii. 7.

^q Luke xiii. 24.

^r Deut. iv. 29.

^s Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

man, the mission of an angel from Heaven, on his account, and of an Evangelist to overtake him, as he was travelling; the joy and peace with which he was blest—it was no more than the accomplishment of the promise, “Seek, and ye shall find.”

No means were there by which he could seek, that were neglected by him. He was not content with his secret devotions, however earnest. He was not content with seeking in his own house, no, nor in his own country, the favour and blessing of God. He seems to have felt like another, who, though morning and evening and noon-day he prayed, and that instantly; though seven times a day he praised God, because of his righteous judgments; though he remembered him upon his bed, and thought upon him as he was waking; yet when, during his exile, he had no longer the opportunity of approaching him in his sanctuary, speaks of himself, while he is at a distance from the altars of his King and his God, as if he were in the case of a bird denied access to its nest and its young.^f And so this man of Ethiopia, looking, no doubt, to the same promises, as to that to Moses, “In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and will bless thee;”^u or to the promise to Solomon, “Mine eyes shall be open, and my ears attent, to the prayer which is made in this place;”^v or, as he would read in Isaiah, “I will make my people joyful in my house of prayer”^w—attracted by these and the like promises, he comes to Jerusalem, as to where God especially manifested himself, as to where his visible throne of grace had been erected—he comes “to *Jerusalem* for to worship.”

But to judge of the earnestness, of the hungering and thirsting, with which he came,—excited, manifestly, by those Scriptures which, we find, were his continual study: (in *this*

^f Psa. lxxxiv. 2, 3.

^v 2 Chron. vii. 15.

^u Exod. xx. 24.

^w Isa. lvi. 7.

way, if in any, he would not neglect to seek ; in the mine of the Scriptures he was digging for the goodly pearls :)—to judge, I say, of the earnest, ardent hungering and thirsting with which he came to Jerusalem to worship, there are other circumstances, also, to be attended to.

He lived at a great distance from Jerusalem. It was a long journey to Jerusalem from Ethiopia. But he was in the state of mind, in which *he* was, who said, “My heart is fixed—my heart is fixed!” No : It was no matter of *form* with him ; and therefore the distance disappeared. He was in a state of mind to compass sea and land, had it been needful, to obtain the blessing of the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Nor was it a hinderance, any more, therefore, that he was so much engaged, as he was. For he had not only his own affairs to attend to, but he was, also, in a station of great authority, under the queen, and had the charge of all her treasure. But it was *other* treasure his heart was set upon, and which he valued above thousands of gold and silver. He made such arrangements, therefore, we find, as would admit of his employing every means for the securing of that treasure, consistently with all necessary attention to his own and a faithful administration of the public affairs.

There is an instance, indeed, in what immediately follows, of his improvement of opportunities, and of what use he made of any intervals of leisure : “As he returned from Jerusalem, while he was sitting in his chariot, he read Esaias the prophet.” In which we may observe two things ; both equally expressive of his earnest seeking : that on his return from the house of worship, instead of letting his thoughts run wild, or turn to the world immediately, he was careful to cherish any better thoughts and feelings, which might have been kindled there ; and that the moments, which he then had, of freedom from public business, he

employed, not in reading state papers, or the like, connected with his official situation, or any ordinary book, but in the study of his Bible.

The next thing which we are called to observe in him, is, the disposition of mind which discovered itself in him, when Philip accosted him, saying, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" A wayfaring man thus addresses himself to a great man—to a great officer of state travelling in his chariot. But he, so far from being offended, as at a presumptuous freedom, and disdaining a reply, meekly and humbly answers, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" Nay—he desires Philip that he will come up into his chariot, and sit with him. The disposition of mind which discovered itself in this, is in character with what we heard before of his earnest seeking. It is when we are humbled, deeply humbled, in a sense of our own utter helplessness, that we seek, as did the Ethiopian, to Him who can supply us out of his fulness. It is when we deeply feel the soul's want and sickness, that we apply in earnest for remedy, to the Physician of the soul. And *then* it is, that the humility, which we profess before God, approves itself genuine, when it appears as much in our ordinary walk and intercourse with *men*.

It was because, then, this man of Ethiopia was so humbly and so earnestly seeking the favour and blessing of God, that he found such grace in his sight—that an angel was sent from Heaven, with instructions concerning him—that Philip was removed from where he was exercising his ministry, to meet him—and that that Saviour was preached to him, his faith in whom made him "go on his way rejoicing."

Oh! are *we* seeking, as did this man of Ethiopia, and whose advantages were as nothing, in comparison of ours? Alas! what is it that most men are seeking? To enjoy the

favour of God, is it? To be delivered from the wrath to come, is it? To live in the peace of a cleansed conscience,—in the joy of a heavenly hope? Ah! but is it not, rather, to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?”—*however*, to make provision for the *present*—to protect themselves from present evils and inconveniences, and gather round them, as much as they can grasp, of present good things?

Say we, it is not so with *us*? Oh! God grant it! God grant, that in the day that is coming, we may prove to have been among the blessed exceptions! And yet are there none present who see themselves in such a description?

Or is the world beginning to unmask itself, and to appear to them in its real character? Perhaps, all the gay and painted clouds are beginning to change into damp and drizzling rain. Ah! it may be, the sky is becoming darker and darker, and that, at intervals, as with the voice of distant thunder, conscience mutters, that “for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!” And would you not have a refuge from the gathering storm? And will you not then seek, as for silver and for hid treasures, what this man of Ethiopia was seeking? Seek, will you not, “grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ?”

Say you, you *are* seeking it? But how does it *appear* you are? Does it appear—to apply what we have been hearing of the Ethiopian—does it appear that you have such a perception as *he* had, of the condition to which sin has reduced you; that you have been brought to a state of unfeigned, of deep, deep humiliation before God? Is there the corresponding meekness and humility, such as we have been observing in the Ethiopian, in your intercourse with *men*? Have you the childlike teachableness of the Ethiopian?

If much engaged, do you improve what intervals you can

snatch from your ordinary occupations, your hours of retirement and leisure, as *he* did? Is your Bible the frequent companion of such hours? Would you, at such times, be found reading of Him who "was led as a sheep to the slaughter?"

When you return from where *you* have been to worship, is it not to the world and the things of the world your mind returns? Do the chords which were struck here, still vibrate? If a live coal from the altar has fallen upon your heart, are you careful, by suitable thoughts and meditations, to keep it alive?

With what feelings do you *come* to the house of prayer? Is it with those, with which we can see the Ethiopian approaching Jerusalem? Are you "glad, when it is said to you, Let us go unto the house of the Lord?" Is the return of the sabbath welcome to you? Are the employments of the sabbath sweet and refreshing to you?

Are all difficulties made light of, that would hinder you from waiting upon God, in his ordinances—and in those of the closet, as well as of the church? Or are reasons and excuses easily found, for the neglect of them? as though, in *our* case, there were something peculiar, and that made it an *exception*—that *we* have *insurmountable* difficulties—that it is not possible for *us* to attend to our religious duties, as it is for others!

As if there were *any* of us, who had not their difficulties! The poor have theirs—their trials, their hardships: and the rich and great, (need I say it?) have *their* peculiar trials and temptations. Yet we find the poor Lazarus in the bosom of the rich Abraham.* Difficulties! "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven."^y And yet did not Job, with his three thousand camels, pass through the needle's

* Luke xvi. 22.

^y Matt. xix. 24.

eye? Some have difficulties arising from peculiarities of natural constitution; others, from early neglect, and disadvantages of education; some, from habits which they have contracted; others, from those with whom they are connected: some have difficulties from depressed spirits; others, from buoyant spirits; some, from fragile health; others, from the uninterrupted enjoyment of robust health: and though there were no other difficulties for us to contend with, were there not more than enough for us *all*, in that coldness and disinclination of the natural heart, of which we must be, all of us, so conscious, to the things of God? The question then is, whether our difficulties be make excuses for the neglect of the opportunities of grace, and the things which accompany salvation; or whether, as the soul takes wing towards God, mountains of difficulties vanish into air?—whether the shallow and languid stream be turned out of its course, by every turf and rush and pebble that obstruct it; or whether every obstruction be borne down and swept away, as the whole tide of the soul sets in towards God?

Once more—Is indispensable business, incessant occupation pleaded, as alas! it so often is, for the neglect of the great business of life? But who could be more occupied, could have more business upon his hands, than this officer of a great queen, and treasurer of her kingdom?

Can we then, after such a comparison of ourselves with what we have been hearing of this man of Ethiopia, can we say, that we are seeking, as *he* did?

As many of us as *are* so seeking—seeking in the public ordinances of the church, and the secret exercises of the closet—seeking in the study of the word of God, at home, and in the ministry of it, here—seeking in deep humility, in a deep sense of want and helplessness and sin, as those who are undone, unless they find—it cannot be, but that you

shall find, no less certainly than did the Ethiopian. Even as from what the Apostle had seen among the Thessalonians, he inferred their election of God, such seeking is no less satisfactory evidence of *your* election. The day is already dawning, and the Sun of righteousness is about to rise upon you, "with healing in his wings." And let this be for the comfort of mourners in Zion, who "walk in darkness," they say, and "have no light"—If they be thus seeking, all is well: "their light shall rise in obscurity, and their darkness shall be as the noon-day!"^z

On the other hand, if we be not thus seeking—no less true is it, be it well observed, that, if we be *not* thus seeking—if there be not an edge and breathing of desire towards God, a hungering and thirsting, such as observances and externals will not satisfy—no, nor any former attainments—certainly we can gather no encouragement respecting our state, from the Eunuch of Ethiopia, nor from that other, who has been referred to, with whom it was to the last, "My soul gaspeth unto thee as a thirsty land!"^a no, nor from him, to whom, as an example, we are especially directed, who, the farther he advanced, pressed only the more earnestly toward the mark "for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."^b

And while such desires and breathings for increase of grace will not flag, to the end, but will be becoming stronger and stronger, continually, in the truly renewed heart; so He who inspires them would see them kindling from the first—in our earliest years. "They that seek me *early*, shall find me,"^c is his *especial* promise. Will not the younger part of the congregation listen—oh! and apply to yourselves what you have heard, of this happy Ethiopian: make the use of your Bibles, which *he* made of *his*; listen

^z Isa. lviii. 10.

^a Psa. cxliii. 6.

^b Phil. iii. 14.

^c Prov. viii. 17.

to the word preached, as *he* did; love the service of the church, as he loved it, and think of and follow up what you hear in it, when you go out of it, as he was found doing, as he was returning in his chariot? Thus seek, as he did; and you shall go on your way rejoicing, as he did. You shall walk—if any, those who set out thus early—in “ways of pleasantness and paths of peace; a light from Heaven shall shine upon your path, from one end of life to the other: while the hope beyond it,—in which if it be for any to abound, it is for *you*,—will make its trials and sorrows as “light afflictions, which endure but for a moment.” If it be for any to have *two* Heavens, a Heaven here, as well as hereafter, it is for those, who, as life opens, open their hearts to God!

But whether old or young, (for is no heart sighing out, Would that *my* early days had been so spent?) whether young or old, I say, seek, as for silver and for hid treasures, what this man of Ethiopia was seeking, and let your past life have been what it may,—notwithstanding the sins of a mis-spent youth, and of a mis-spent manhood; notwithstanding all past carelessness, and neglect, and forgetfulness of God, all past indulgence of evil passions, and appetites, and tempers: though your sins were as scarlet—seek as *he* did, with all your heart; and when it is said to you, as it was to him, “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world”^d—when the Saviour is, in like manner, presented to you, believe, as he did, with all your heart—let it be so, as he is this day preached to you—and you may return to your home, this day, even as the Ethiopian returned to his home, rejoicing in the forgiveness of your sins, and in the hope of glory everlasting!

I would add, only, that as we were picturing to ourselves, how the Ethiopian, on his return to his own country, would

^d John i. 29.

be for making known to his countrymen the Saviour, with the knowledge of whom he had been blest himself—would return as a Missionary, as well as in his former capacity of treasurer of the kingdom: even so will *you*, as surely as you have been brought into the state into which *he* was brought, you will rejoice in the *service*, as well as in the mercy of God: “The Lord whose I am, and whom I *serve*,” you will desire to say of yourself; you would be his servant to do his pleasure, as well as his child enjoying his favour; not content with being blest yourself, you would be a blessing to all around you: while in Him who “was led as a sheep to the slaughter” for you, you see the face of God shining upon yourself, it will shine through you upon those to whom he would have you to be a dispenser of his blessings, and a witness of the grace—of the grace which there is for the chief of sinners, who seek it with all their heart!

Let me now express, for those of the congregation who are about to remove from where they have been temporary residents, the desire and prayer of one who has been permitted, occasionally, to address them—that they may return to their home, as did this Ethiopian; as those to whom the ministry of the Gospel has been blest, as it was to him; and that, through the shining of their light, others, as well as themselves, may go on their way rejoicing!

And if, at one time more than at another, we may hope all grace and blessing to descend, is it not when we have been seeking it where, for those who come hungering and thirsting, there is meat indeed and drink indeed,—where as many as duly receive the “holy mysteries,” are fed with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of Christ, their Saviour; are assured of the favour and goodness of God towards them, that they are very members of the mystical body of his Son, and heirs, through hope, of his ever-

lasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of his dear Son? ^e

May He now, so fulfil us (as in that prayer, which the church in her large expectations, puts into the mouth of the communicants)—so fulfil us may he, with his grace and heavenly benediction, that, as those who have renewed their strength, while we have renewed the dedication of ourselves to his service and his glory, we may, with renewed alacrity,—as who would make more rapid progress,—run the race which is set before us; and though the road should be rough, (to some of us it may be painfully so,) and the sky—though he should seem to “clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering”—that yet, in communion with Him who is on the right hand of God, and in the full assurance of faith, and while we are looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, we may go on our way, though sorrowful, yet, always rejoicing!

Now unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all glory and praise!

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that we may seek, as those who would find, and that we *may* find grace, mercy and peace, and live as thy servants and to thy glory, and in the blessed hope of thine everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

^e Communion Service.



SERMON XV.

FESTUS, AGRIPPA, AND PAUL.

ACTS xxvi. 24—29.

“And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

“But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

“For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

“King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

“And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

AND would to God, that all of us, who hear Paul, *this day*, were both almost, and altogether, such as he was! For what could be desired for any of us, beyond it, my brethren?

There are others, however, presented to us in this passage, to whom our attention is to be directed, besides Paul. In the three individuals who are introduced in it, Festus, Agrippa, and Paul himself, three distinct classes are represented.

Upon hearing of Paul's conversion, of the object which he had in life, and his hope beyond this life, “Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much

learning doth make thee mad." The subjects of which Paul treated, the sentiments which he uttered, were unintelligible to Festus. It was as if he spoke in an unknown tongue! In Festus we see those of whom the Apostle says in the fourth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, that "the god of this world hath blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Such the use which Satan makes of that world, of which he is the god! and by its frivolities and vanities, no less than by its more absorbing pursuits and grosser sensualities, he succeeds in intercepting the light. As if you were standing upon some eminence, which commanded a most extensive and enchanting prospect, let an object, never so insignificant, be placed before the eyes, it would shut it all out: even so, the world's veriest trifles serve to shut out the view of the glorious Gospel of Christ, of Him who is the image of God.

Not but that, apart from any influence which the world exercises upon us, the mind, with respect to such perceptions, labours under an incapacity, in itself. For *spiritual* objects we are *born blind*. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him"^a—*foolishness*, says the Apostle: when Paul spoke of them, he seemed "beside himself, *mad!*" Ah! and as the love of the world, and the lusts of the flesh are *indulged*, there is not only an inapprehensiveness, and blindness, but an aversion, also, and antipathy—"The carnal mind is enmity against God."^b

There may be, all the while, it is true, the form of religion—so much of religion, that is, as is consistent with *living* to the *flesh*. In compliance with custom, or as what is necessary to maintain a certain respectability in society, or to lull conscience, the externals of religion may be

^a 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^b Rom. viii. 7.

observed. There may be religion, up to the point at which it becomes *a reality*. But let a man take up religion, with the interest with which the politician, for instance, pursues his political objects, or the merchant engages in commercial enterprises; let the soldier of Christ follow his profession, as another soldier does his military calling; and he is regarded by those whom Festus represents, as *he* regarded Paul—in the light of an enthusiast. There may be the form and externals of Christianity, as, no doubt, would have been the case with Festus, had he lived in a country which professed it; while there is an utter insensibility to the reality of it. Such the class of persons presented to us in Festus: not neglectful, it may be, of the outward observances of religion, but altogether under another influence—under the influence of the world; following the impulses of the carnal mind; having no higher objects or perceptions, than those of the natural man!

Let us now turn to Agrippa, the representative of another class. “King Agrippa,” Paul asks him, “believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then said Agrippa to Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” It would seem his understanding was convinced, and his conscience touched, but that there was a chain that held him back: and what that chain was, we may form some conjecture, from what is said of the “great pomp” with which Agrippa and his queen entered the court,^c—that it was the chain of “the pride of life;” in other words, of this same *world*. While his understanding is convinced, and his conscience alarmed, the heart holds out against the conviction of the one, and the remonstrances of the other. The light was coming in, but it was unpleasant to his eyes, and he shut his eyes against it, and again plunged into the darkness, which he loved, rather

^c Acts xxv. 23.

than light. Is it asked, who they are that resemble Agrippa? A man may have been moved and impressed by an address from the pulpit, as Agrippa was by that of Paul; or the conversation of a Christian friend may not have been without effect; or a book may have made an impression; or, perhaps, while you have been lying upon a bed of sickness, thoughts of death, of God, of your sins, of eternity, have rushed in upon you; or, it may be, that while you were watching by the bed-side, and counting the fluttering pulse of one very dear to you, light flashed across you, and the life which you were living appeared in its true colours, and religion in something of its importance: but the world again came in, and counteracted the better influences. Must I then give up such and such pursuits? must I deny myself such and such gratifications? how can I break with such connexions? how can I bring myself to make such sacrifices? what will my friends and associates say? what will the world think of me? Considerations, like these, rise up in opposition to the other voice which had begun to make itself to be heard, and overpower it, and carry the day. Even Pilate was "almost persuaded" to acquit the blessed Saviour; but the fear of losing his popularity with the people, and his interest with Cæsar, over-persuaded him.

Such the class that Agrippa represents! And is there not reason to fear, it is a scarce less numerous class than the other—ah! and in no less dangerous a state? Suppose that during a storm at sea, you were standing upon one of these headlands, from which you saw two vessels, one far out at sea, contending for awhile with the raging elements, and then overpowered by them: the other you see approaching towards the harbour, and now within a short distance of it, when the fury of the storm becomes irresistible. It has no advantage from being so near where it would have

been safe. And how many, it is to be feared, who seemed "not far from the kingdom of Heaven," who were "almost persuaded" to "strive to enter in," yet never enter Heaven!

Let us now turn to Paul, the representative of the third class. "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether *such as I am*, except these bonds!" It cannot have escaped us, what *happiness* he enjoyed, notwithstanding those bonds! No: he would not have exchanged his *chains*, worn in such a cause, for the dignity of Festus, nor for the crown of Agrippa. But happy would it have been for them, thought he, to have changed places with *him*, to have been such as he was!

What manner of person, then, was he? He gives some account of himself, in this his defence before Festus and Agrippa. The time was, when he verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, and did them; when, through infinite mercy, the light broke in upon him, and his eyes were opened to see himself as a lost sinner, and to see the Saviour of sinners—to see in himself the chief of sinners, while a Saviour he saw, whose grace abounded beyond his abounding sin. From that time, it became his object in life, to open the eyes of *others*, to turn *others* "from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God; that," like himself, "they might receive the forgiveness of their sins, and an inheritance" (the prospect of which cast a constant sunshine upon his path)—"an inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in Christ Jesus."^d Or, to refer to another account which he gives of himself, that in the first chapter of his first epistle to Timothy—"Who *before* was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of

^d Acts xxvi. 18.

our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Such, then, Paul *had been!* And such, through the exceeding abundant grace of Christ, Paul *became!*

Neither can it have escaped us, as we heard him giving the account of what he thus became, of the mercy of which he was himself the object, how exultingly he speaks of the mercy which there was for others *like him*—that "for this cause he obtained mercy, that in him, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a *pattern* to them who should hereafter believe on him."e Oh! yes—observe well, in the review of the character of Paul, the spirit which breathed (for this is the *true* working of the Gospel in the heart that receives it)—observe the spirit which breathed in the ardent desire which he expressed for the participation of others in the happiness which he enjoyed, for the salvation of others, in the going out of his heart and soul to others! We find him uniformly breathing the same solicitude for others, that they might become such as *he* was, as that which he expressed before Festus and Agrippa. His bowels yearned over the whole human race. Even like his Divine Master Himself, he was "ready to spend and to be spent" for others!

Like which of these three characters, then—belonging to which of these three classes—has this Sabbath-day found *us*, my brethren?

Am I addressing any, (for in what congregation can we

^e 1 Tim. i. 16.

be sure we are not?) who, while they have the form and externals of Christianity, are strangers to the power, to the reality of it; regard, it may be, anything beyond its outward decorum, anything of life and warmth in religion, as enthusiasm and extravagance? Let me, then, say to them, if there should be any such in the present congregation, what Paul said to Festus, It is *not* madness, this! The words which describe real religion as engaging the whole man, as drawing to itself all the heart, all the mind, all the soul, all the strength, are yet words of truth and soberness. No—It is not madness,—or the Angels would be mad, who, penetrated as they are with the sense of the love of God, are all on fire to do his will! And Christ's religion—(for what is it but the revelation of the love, of which, in Him, *we* are the objects?)—it gives us, as we come under its influence, the wings of angels, to fly upon any service, by which the glory of God may be promoted, and the good of our fellow-creatures! Ah! which is the madman—he who is living upon the confines of eternity, as if there were no eternity; or he who counts everything as nothing, in comparison of the coming eternity?

And yet, though I were addressing those of the former class, it would not be, as though they were to *remain* such, (blessed be God!) I should have to address them. But,—“*awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,*”^f—could I not say to them? For is it not the Apostle's own language to such? For what other was the commission that he received, but “to open the blind eyes, to turn men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God;” that those who were in such a condition, “might receive the forgiveness of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified, through faith in Christ Jesus?” Nay—Have we not heard

^f Eph. v. 14.

him declare it to have been a main design of his own conversion, that it should serve for "a pattern" and example of the mercy which would be extended to others like him? Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and there is no reason but that you should become such as Paul was!

Or, am I addressing any, who, like Agrippa, are "almost persuaded," but with whom an opposing influence is prevailing against the conviction of the understanding, and the voice of conscience? That the state of such is most alarming, is not to be disguised. They are engaged in a contest with conscience and truth—in a contest with God himself, are they not engaged? And let it be added, that every time they resist the truth, it is rendered easier for them to resist it again; that it is thus a man comes to have less and less of impressibility, becomes less accessible to conviction, and less disposed to yield to it. This is precisely what is meant in Scripture by "the hardening of the heart." By such repeated acting against conviction, and resistance to the truth, the mind becomes darkened, the conscience blunted, and the heart impenetrable: "From him that hath not, is taken away even that which he hath."^g

"To-day," then—is it without reason we are admonished as we are, that "while it is called to-day," we "harden not our hearts?"^h No—but if you would not put salvation farther from you than ever, if you would not make your coming to a decision in religion more improbable than ever, let not the opposing influence prevail another hour against conscience and conviction, against another opportunity which God is giving you, against another appeal from the Gospel of his grace to you. Content to be *almost* persuaded! We might be as well content to be *almost saved*!

But neither are those to be passed by, in the application

^g Matt. xiii. 12.

^h Heb. iii. 13, 15.

of the subject, who are "altogether such as Paul was." For are they not to be exhorted, to become more and more "altogether" such as *he* was;—to breathe after more of that faith, for example, (and some of us may have much need of more of it,) under the influence of which, this present world shall have less attraction for us, and less hold upon us;—that we may be, more decidedly, as those who are not *of* it?—as Paul, while he showed all respect for the distinctions of rank and station, gave all due honour to "king Agrippa," and "most noble Festus," yet set not the smallest value, either upon the high situation of the one, or upon the royal dignity of the other, in comparison of the situation in which *he* stood, and the dignity which *he* enjoyed, as "the ambassador"ⁱ and "prisoner of Jesus Christ."^j More of that faith, do not we want, which is not content with mere clearness of views, and correctness of doctrine, and orthodoxy of creed; but which has the stamp of Paul's orthodoxy upon it—of that faith, which gives such living truth, such substance and reality to things distant and unseen, as to reduce to their true proportion and value the visible and the present; which gives the unseen world an habitual ascendancy over all the influences, with which sense plies and solicits us; makes him who is under the influence of it rise superior, whether to the smile or the frown of the world, with which he is surrounded; which can make heavy trials light, protracted ones, as though they endured but for a moment, in the comparison which it makes of them, with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, by which they will be succeeded—Do not we want more of faith like this?

If there be anything to be added, in the application to this third class, it is, that you would seek more, dear brethren, of the spirit which breathed in Paul's earnest solicitude for *others*, that in this, also, we may be followers

ⁱ 2 Cor. v. 20.

^j Eph. iii. 1.

of Paul, as he was of Christ—even till that his “would to God!” find an echo in our own bosom, and that prayers for others, like his, breathe from ourselves, and exertions like his, be made by us, that more and more may become such as he was, may be turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and receive the forgiveness of their sins, and an inheritance, together with ourselves, among the blessed, through faith in Christ Jesus!

The Lord so bless the ministry of his Gospel in this church, that if there be any in the state of Festus, in the congregations that attend it, they may be arrested and awakened, and pass from death unto life; and that such as are only “almost persuaded,” may, under the blessed sound of it, be *altogether* so, and decided; and that those of the class which Paul represents, may, in superiority to this present world, and the realisation of another, and in the love of God and man, become more and more such as Paul was!

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard, this day with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us fruit, according to our several states before Thee, of conviction, of conversion, and of going on to perfection, to thy praise and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XVI.

HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS.

1 SAMUEL ii. part of 25th verse.

“Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.”

THE melancholy history is familiar to us. The aged Eli, at last, expostulated with his abandoned sons. But he spoke as to the winds. And the explanation is,—“because the Lord would slay them.”

As when Sihon, king of Heshbon, refused the Israelites a passage through his country, on their march to their own, a like reason is assigned for his refusal—as we read in the second chapter of Deuteronomy, at the thirtieth verse, “But Sihon, king of Heshbon, would not let us pass by him; for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thine hand.” Or, as when they had reached the land of Canaan, “it was of the Lord,” as it is in the eleventh chapter of the book of Joshua, at the twentieth verse, “It was of the Lord, to harden the hearts of the Canaanites to come out against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as

the Lord commanded Moses." Or, to come to Gospel times : we read, for example, in the twelfth chapter of St. John's Gospel, at the thirty-ninth verse, why it was, that the Gospel made no more impression upon the men of that generation, than did the expostulation of Eli upon his sons—"Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them."

Let me request your attention, my brethren, to two solemn truths—truths of no small practical importance to us—which are to be gathered from the explanation that is given, why the sons of Eli hearkened not to the voice of their father.

The first is this : that for anything to act beneficially upon us from *without*, the Spirit of God must act upon us *within* ; as it was for the want of such an application to the hearts and consciences of these depraved young men, that the remonstrance of their father made no impression upon them. It is *therefore* we meet with such a complaint, as that in the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, "O Lord, wherefore hast thou *made* us to err from thy ways, and hast hardened our hearts from thy fear?" When the Heaven above is as brass, the heart, as well as the ground, becomes iron.

Why was it, that that woman by the river-side of Philippi attended, as her companions did not, to the things which were spoken of Paul, but because "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia,"^a as he did not open the hearts of the others ?

Or, on the other hand, why was it that the signs and wonders which were wrought in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, made no greater impression upon those that witnessed them, but because the Lord did not, at

^a Acts xvi. 14.

the same time, speak to their *hearts*? As we read in the twenty-ninth chapter of Deuteronomy, "Ye have seen," said Moses to the people, "all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land: the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the Lord hath not given you," he adds, "the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."

The Apostle directs Timothy, "with meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves," not with the expectation that such meekness, or all the instruction which he should give in the spirit of meekness, would of itself prevail to overcome their opposition; but—"if God peradventure," he says, "if God peradventure would give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth."^b

How is it to be explained, that He who spake as never man spake—that when He was made flesh and dwelt among us, who was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person"—how is it to be explained, that "he was despised and rejected of men," but as he explains it himself, because "none could come to him, except the Father who sent him drew them?"^c

Though the Apostle himself were addressing our congregation, it might be that only a Lydia here and there, as whose hearts only the Lord opened, would be impressed; or it might be that one and all of us would be so, if we were one and all of us, that is, "taught of God," as well as by Paul.

Why is it, as the pastor goes from house to house, that while, in one house, "the word of God is received with all readiness of mind;"^d in another, an impatience is expressed to escape from it to any other subject?

^b 2 Tim. ii. 25.

^c John vi. 44.

^d Acts xvii. 11.

Why is it, that while the experience of the evil that is in the world, leads one to fly from it and renounce it ; another, the greater the familiarity he contracts with it, becomes the more conformed and assimilated to it ?

Why is it, when sickness is sent, that while one is the better, to all eternity, for the Fatherly correction, another leaves his sick-bed and all his good resolutions behind with it ?

Why is it, in the hour of affliction, that while one turns only to the God of all comfort, another is willing to accept such consolation as the world offers ?

Why is it, in the church-yard, while one is in sympathy with the solemn scene, and returns solemnised himself from it, and does not forget the lessons of mortality and of immortality, which, as he hung over the grave, he was imbibing ; that another, after the same spectacle, and the same service, joins in the giddy dance of life, as thoughtless as ever ; and in the midst of the excitements, and expectations, and competitions connected with the surrounding scene, seems to forget, that he is upon the brink of eternity, all the while ?

Why is it, that the approach of death itself fails to awaken so many to the realities beyond it— that men die in the same spiritual insensibility in which they lived ?

The explanation, in these and in all other such instances, whether it be in the dispensations of his providence, or in the ministry of his word ; whether in the contingencies of life, or in the solemnities of death that God speaks to us ;— if his voice be disregarded, the explanation is, in all, the same—that he does not *give* “the hearing ear and the understanding heart”—it is, because the application to the outward man is not accompanied by a corresponding application to the inner man—that the lesson is not sent home by that Spirit who alone giveth life.

But, perhaps, the explanation may seem to require to be explained, itself.

Let us then pass on to the other truth, which, as it was said, is to be gathered from the reason that is assigned, why the sons of Eli hearkened not to the voice of their father. For a man might be tempted to ask, as it has been often rashly asked,—If the influence of the Spirit of God be so indispensable, in order to any effectual impression being made upon us, and that God *withhold* such influence, how is a man responsible for not being impressed? And is it then supposed, that Hophni and Phinehas were not responsible for steeling themselves, as they did, against the voice of their father? But if it was “because the Lord would slay them,” does not their preceding dark history explain *why* the Lord would slay them? It is true, “the wind bloweth where it listeth.”^e “The Lord will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”^f But we are not left altogether in the dark who they *are* whom he hardeneth. In the very declaration, that “his Spirit will not *always* strive with men,”^g are we not given to understand, *how long* He does strive with them? Even the depraved Hophni and Phinehas would not have said, that there never was a time when they were conscious of the voice of a monitor within them; that they never knew what a remonstrance from *within* was; what a testimony on the side of righteousness and in reprobation of all unrighteousness in their own bosom was; that they never knew what self-disapprobation, self-reproach was; that they never heard a knock at the door, ah! and knock after knock, though they would not open it.

No, let a man be never so sunk in sin, the time was, when conscience struggled with him, and it was not till he struggled against conscience, and stifled its admonitions, and would not be restrained by it, that he gave the reins to his lusts. Nay, might we not appeal to him, whether, even

^e John iii. 8.

^f Rom. ix. 18.

^g Gen. vi. 3.

when he had cast off all fear of God, God even then cast off all *care* for *him*; whether, in the midst of his life of ungodliness and worldly lusts, he did not still hear, at intervals, a voice that would have recalled him; yes, whether it were not, as if, by that vicegerent of God in his bosom, God were crying after him, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?"^h With such "long-suffering," as the Apostle speaks, does God "endure the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction"ⁱ—fitted for destruction by their resistance of that grace, which, if it had not been resisted, would have fitted them for salvation.

The second truth, then, which we gather from the subject before us, is this—that if God withhold from a man that Spirit, without whom nothing can be blest to him, it is not, till, by a wilful and habitual resistance to those his motions and inspirations of which the conscience is the organ, he has forfeited for himself any further repetition of them; that it is not, till, in such appeals and remonstrances, the Holy Spirit has been habitually resisted and repelled by him. For, is it not the law of the administration of the Spirit, that "from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away?"^j As, in a passage that has been referred to, Moses would have had the people to infer that it was their own sin that "God had not given them the heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto that day:" for that, (as it is explained in the seventy-eighth Psalm) they were "a faithless and stubborn generation, a generation which set not their heart aright, and whose spirit cleaved not steadfastly unto God." As it was because the iniquity of the Amorites was *full*, that God hardened their hearts that they should come out in battle against Israel, that they might be destroyed.

And so it comes to pass, as what unhappy man who has

^h Hos. xi. 8.

ⁱ Rom. ix. 22

^j Matt xiii. 12.

been in the habit of resisting such influences, has not, in the progress of his resistance, found it to be? that “the moral sense”—in the language of a writer not unknown,^k (for after having met with it, I feel as if I could not express what I would, in other language—so truly and so emphatically is the fatal process described in it,) that “the moral sense becomes every day more languid in its admonitions, the impression of present guilt and future danger weaker and weaker; what was at first a loud protest dies away into a scarce audible whisper; for the horror which sin once excited, an insensibility to it succeeds; the conscience which was once so tender and ready to take alarm at the first approach of evil, contracts a hardness and callousness, impenetrable to whatever appeal may be made to it.”

Yes—It was because they “did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge, that he gave them over to a reprobate mind.”^l If to others of whom the Apostle speaks, “God sent strong delusion that they should believe a lie,” it was “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”^m If “the things which belonged to their peace” were “hid from the eyes” of those over whom the Saviour wept,ⁿ was it not because, when he would “so often have gathered them, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, they would not?” *Therefore* it was, their “house was left unto them desolate!”^o

And may it be, then, because a man has resisted the Spirit striving with him, till he has been given over to follow the devices and desires of his own heart, unrestrained

^k Dr. Chalmers, (in a sermon upon the Sin against the Holy Ghost, under a deep impression of which, and of what was suggested by it, this was written.)

^l Rom. i. 28.

^m 2 Thess. ii. 10.

ⁿ Luke xix. 41, 42.

^o Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.

and undisturbed—may this be the explanation, that, while he is “walking according to the course of this world,” he seems to have no more of uneasiness or apprehension, than if he had no cause for any? May it be the explanation of the peace which he enjoys, while “the carnal mind which is enmity against God” is dominant in him, that he has so long “kicked against the pricks” as to have incurred the sentence, of any, on this side of eternal judgment, the most awful that can be pronounced upon a man—“Let him alone?”^p Is the calm which we see, the precursor of a terrific storm? Is conscience about to revenge itself for the silence which has been imposed upon it, and after having been neglected as a counsellor and monitor, to become an open-mouthed accuser—for after such neglect of its admonitions, will it not—if its still small voice has not been attended to, will it not one day speak, as in a voice of thunder? Why is it, that he who is consigned to where shall be “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” is represented as being “speechless,”^q when he is condemned; that he offers no plea, attempts no defence? Why, but because he is self-convicted—self-condemned! No other condemnation is wanting, than that of his own accusing and condemning conscience. It is the astounding correspondence between the book of God’s remembrance, as it is opened, and that which has become legible, as in characters of fire, in his own bosom, that strikes him dumb!

Need I then say, in applying the subject to ourselves, my brethren, how it concerns us not to act against our convictions—not to resist any of the intimations, of the admonitions, of those touches and whispers within us, by which the Holy Spirit would lead us in the right way—not to tamper with a sense of duty—not to let principle be overborne by inclination;—as we would not repel and forfeit all

^p Hosea iv. 17.

^q Matt. xxii. 11—13.

such influences, or contract a hardness of heart, which is inaccessible to them!

Wretched Saul! He forced himself to offer up the burnt-offering which he knew it was for Samuel only to offer:^r he reserved, as for sacrifice, the best of the spoil which was to have been destroyed utterly;^s he acted against his convictions—and what do we then hear of him, but that “the Spirit of the Lord departed from him”^t—and into what depths after depths he plunged!

Wretched Pilate!—“Take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him.”^u He found no fault in him—yet, rather than lose his popularity with the people, and his interest with Cæsar, pronounces upon the Holy One and the Just, a sentence, which by his own confession was *unjust*!

Wretched Agrippa! Thou wast “almost persuaded” to be a Christian. And why only *almost* persuaded, but because, while the truth was drawing him one way, the world drew him another. The light was coming in, but it was unpleasant to his eyes—to those eyes which the pomp and pride of life had dazzled and bewitched—and he shut his eyes against it, and again plunged into the darkness which he loved rather than light!

The light that was in them, as they would not be directed by it, became darkness. “And how great,” according to the solemn reflection of the Saviour, “how great is such darkness!”^v

My younger brethren, as you have any regard for all present and for your everlasting peace, let me conjure you to cherish as a sacred thing, all the tenderness of youthful conscience. Never let conscience have to reproach you, as when Reuben said to his brethren, “Spake I not unto you,

^r 1 Sam. xiii. 12.

^s 1 Sam. xv. 9.

^t 1 Sam. xvi. 14.

^u John xix. 6.

^v Matt. vi. 23.

saying, Do not sin against the child, and you would not hear? therefore behold, also, his blood is required." ^w May you never hear from a voice, like that of Reuben, *within* you—Said I not unto you, that you ought not to do it, and yet you *would*, or that you *ought*, and you would *not*! Young friends,—as you would not contract you know not what defilement, "*touch* not the unclean thing." Set not your foot upon the forbidden ground, as you would not advance you know not how far, upon it. Let not the law of opinion or of example prevail with you, against what you know to be the law of God. Let not the edge of truth be blunted by anything of evasion or equivocation. Let not company be kept, or books read, which, though as you might think they would not shake your principles, might yet leave a stain upon the imagination. Do you hear a voice calling you to be, from your youth up, "as the sons of God, blameless and undefiled in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation?" ^x—Let not false shame, nor unworthy fear, prevail against that voice. Alas! that we should be so liable to be affected by what the world may say or think of us, while we hear, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with his holy angels!" ^y As you have any regard—let me repeat it—as you have any regard for the peace which the world cannot give, let neither its frown nor its smile, nor any of the various temptations to which you are exposed in it, make you disobedient or inattentive to the authoritative monitor, to that oracle of God, which is within you.

I would make a further application of the subject—a more *specific* one, however. Are there any present who would wait awhile before they become religious? *Wait awhile*

^w Gen. xlii. 22.

^x Phil. ii. 15.

^y Mark viii. 38.

before you become religious! What! as if the matter were in your own hands, and not altogether at the disposal of God! and as if God had not established laws and principles, according to which he gives or withholds the *power* to become religious! And have we not seen it to be one of those laws and principles, that by *delay* the power is forfeited?

A man is going on, as he knows he ought not, with the intention, at some future period, of extricating himself, as by a violent wrench, from the grasp of sin, and from the hold which the world has upon him. Meanwhile, he takes the most effectual method to incapacitate himself for any such change. By his continued resistance to the motions of that Spirit, without whom it cannot take place, he is ever provoking God altogether to withdraw his holy Spirit from him. What an emphasis does not such a consideration give to those words, which, for warning as well as for encouragement, accompany every publication of the Gospel—“Behold, *now* is the accepted time—Behold, *now* is the day of salvation!”^z

Yet I feel, while I am speaking, as if, in some, the awful apprehension might be excited, that by the violations of conscience, the amount of resistance to the motions of the Holy Spirit of which they have been guilty already, they may have placed themselves beyond recovery. But let me ask such, are you willing *now*—willing to be released from your chains, to exchange masters, to turn your face to God, and your back upon all sin? If you be, the fact speaks for itself—the Holy Spirit is at this moment striving with you. “How often would I have gathered them,” says the Saviour, “as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and they would not!” But *you would*. Come then under those wings—under the wings of that Saviour, whose

^z 2 Cor. vi. 2.

“ blood cleanseth from all sin,” and under the wings of that Spirit, who, for the heart of stone which sin has made, will put a heart of his own making, within you.

Yet, be it also remembered, that if the present relenting be not improved—if the present breathing of the Spirit upon you be not complied with—if the present overture of mercy be not accepted—if “ to-day ” you *again* “ harden your heart,” there is no promise for you, but that it may be with you, even as it was with Saul, when the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and God may “ swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest.”^a Will you not then—or all that has been said has been lost upon you, and *another* appeal from God to you will have been resisted—will you not, even while I speak, fly for the forgiveness of all past violations of conscience, and resistances to the motions of God within you, to the all-forgiving Saviour, and yield yourself up to the Spirit who is striving with you, to be led, and ruled, and governed by him for ever ?

Yet I cannot content myself without adding a word of exhortation, if I may be permitted, to those of us, also, who have not now to *begin*. It is, that you would listen, dear brethren,—listen, as those, whose ear is no longer dull of hearing, to every sound and whisper of the Holy Spirit within you, and that you would uniformly and scrupulously act, as the Spirit shall direct you, and to the full extent of his directions—that, “ by reason of use, your senses may be exercised,” your spiritual apprehension quickened, “ to discern between good and evil,”^b not only in their broader features and distinctions, but in those, also, of which an experienced and advanced spiritual perception becomes apprehensive—in more entangled questions of practical difficulty, in the application of principles to circumstances, in all the intricacies and perplexities by which a conscience,

^a Psa. xciv. 7, 8, 11.

^b Heb. v. 14.

less enlightened, is so liable to be embarrassed. For, as “from him who hath not, even that which he hath is taken away, to him who *hath*, shall be *given*.” As we are faithful to the light which we possess, that light becomes clearer and more distinct. As we conscientiously act up to what we know, discoveries are made to us of what we do not know: while again, each such advancement in the *knowledge* of God will be followed by a corresponding progress in conformity to the *will* of God. From being babes in Christ, first opening our eyes upon the light, and only beginning to walk, we grow up to be “children in malice” only, and in understanding, decision, and conduct, to be as men.

I scarce need add—after what has been before us of the necessity, in order that anything may act beneficially upon us from *without*, that the Holy Spirit should act upon us *within*; seeing that the greatest outward advantages, the most edifying religious instructions, the most impressive providential dispensations, can profit us nothing, unless the Holy Spirit impress and apply all—I scarce need remind you, my brethren, how much it must then concern us—whether we be under the chastening rod, or occupied with the inspired word—how it concerns parents in their families, teachers in their solicitude for those under their instruction, the minister in the pulpit, the hearing congregation—whether we hear or speak, act or suffer—to pray that that Holy Spirit, upon whom all the success and blessing depend, may accompany the dispensations of the providence of God, the labours of his servants, and the word and ordinances of his grace! As I would now earnestly pray, on behalf of those whom I am addressing—oh! that it may be with *none* of them, as it was with those sons of Eli when they hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them; but that all may

hearken, because the Lord would *bleſs*, would *ſave* you ; that the Holy Spirit may ſo impreſs his word upon you now, and bring it to your remembrance afterwards, that you may be no uninfluenced hearers in the church, nor as forgetful ones out of it ; that as “to thoſe who have,” more and “more may be given” you, my brethren ; that as to thoſe, who would be led by the Spirit of God habitually, and not by their own, “grace and peace may be multiplied to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ;”—that your path may be “as the ſhining light, ſhining more and more unto the perfect day !”

Grant, we beſeech Thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have now heard with our outward ears, may through thy grace be ſo inwardly grafted in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruits of the Spirit, prayer for the Spirit, obedience to all the dictates and motions of the Spirit, that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

SERMON XVII.

THE PROPITIATION FOR SIN.

(PREACHED ON GOOD FRIDAY.)

ISAIAH liii. 5, 6.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

As I would draw your attention, my brethren, to the whole of the chapter with which these words stand in connection, I would, before I attempt any exposition, read the whole of it. (Isa. liii.)

“Of whom speaketh the Prophet this?” said the eunuch of Ethiopia to the Evangelist, as he was found reading this chapter in his Bible—“Of himself, or of some other man?” “Then Philip opened his mouth,” we read, “and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him JESUS,”^a as to whom the chapter referred. The passage in the preceding chapter, which introduces this—“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation”—applies in the highest sense, (we

^a Acts viii. 35.

learn from the Apostle's reference to it in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans,) to the good tidings of the salvation of Jesus. If there be one chapter of the Old Testament, in which, more than in another, the Gospel is presented to us without a veil, I need not say, that it is this!

Let us now apply our minds, my brethren, to what is in this evangelical chapter—oh! and that it may be in the spirit of teachableness and love of the truth, with which the Ethiopian listened to the Evangelist interpreting it!

What first demands our attention in it, is the description of the humiliation and sufferings of him who is the subject of it: "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." Our thoughts at once turn to the opening of the eleventh chapter, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse"—out of the stem, not of royal David, but of obscure Jesse. The human descent of the Saviour is traced to the family from which he was to descend, while it was yet in obscurity—to signify the obscurity with which, according to the flesh, his Divine glory was to be shrouded. For the same reason, he is compared to a root growing up "out of a dry ground"—out of ground in which there was no moisture to nourish it: for that his growth was to be, not from what was supplied from beneath, but from above; not of the flesh, but from that "Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord," which was to rest upon him. He is described, therefore, as "without form or comeliness" to the eye of man; as having "no beauty, that, when we should see him, we should desire him;"—because there was to be nothing of the *world* about him, nothing to attract the worldly mind, nothing to fall in with the tastes and gratify the desires of the flesh. An infidel nobleman,

who lived in the reign of Charles II., who, after having by his misapplied wit and talents acquired for himself a brilliant reputation in the world, was (as we are informed by Bishop Burnet) converted to Christianity by this chapter, remarked upon the passage of it now before us, that the world saw no beauty in the Saviour, because he did not appear, as *he* had done, in a fool's coat; so that while *he* was applauded and admired, the Saviour was despised and rejected.

Nor was it only, that he was despised and rejected, but he was also "oppressed and afflicted." "A man of sorrows," was he, "and acquainted with grief." "He was numbered with the transgressors. He is brought as a sheep to the slaughter. He is cut off from the land of the living."

Such the prophetic description of the humiliation and sufferings of our Divine Redeemer! We are also told here—and let us consider this, secondly—why it was he submitted to them?

"We did esteem him stricken, smitten of GOD," (says the Prophet in the name of the people,) as though he *deserved* what he suffered—As when Pilate demanded, "What accusation bring ye against this man?"—"If he were not a *malefactor*," said they, "we would not have delivered him up unto thee."^b But no, says the Prophet, It was "for the transgression of *my people* he was stricken." If he bore griefs, they were "*our* griefs"—he "carried *our* sorrows:" or grief or sorrow he had never known. If he was wounded, it was "for our transgressions;" if he was bruised, it was "for our iniquities;" if chastisement was his portion, it was that peace might be ours; if stripes were laid upon him, it was that with those stripes we might be healed. Do we read, that "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth," when he was arraigned? It was because he would not deprecate the sentence, to which he

^b John xviii. 29, 30.

had subjected himself for *us* ; because though “ he had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth,” he had put himself in the place of those, in whose mouth there *was* deceit, who *had* done violence ; because, though without iniquity himself, the Lord had laid upon him the iniquity of us all ; though himself sinless, “ he bare the sin of many ;” because, though “ as a lamb without blemish and without spot,” he was the Lamb, which was to take away, and which must therefore suffer for, the sin of the world !

Such the explanation of the sufferings of the Saviour ! It is, also, impressively described—and let this be attended to by us in the third place—what there was, in us, that called for such an interposition on our behalf : “ All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way.” We had left the fold—wandered into wild pastures : as when “ the younger son,” in the parable, preferred the “ far country” to the house and society of his father. In the following words, “ we have turned every one to his own way,” the very essence of sin is presented to us. For to prefer our own will to the will of God, is the very essence of sin—to choose the things which please ourselves, rather than the things that please God—instead of living in subjection to, and in dependence upon God, to desire to be independent of him !

And while the condemnation is universal, “ All we like sheep have gone astray,” the whole world is brought in guilty before God—the guilt is at the same time brought home to the breast of every individual, “ We have turned every one to his own way.”

Oh ! but in what darker colours could the “ enmity of the carnal mind” against God be described, than when it is said that upon the appearance of the only begotten Son in our nature, “ men hid, as it were, their faces from him ;” that instead of turning from every other object, to regard him,

they turned away from him, to any other object; that when he came, saying, "Look unto me and be ye saved," they looked at anything rather than at him!

Not that the humiliation and sufferings of the Saviour were to be without a great result. Let us follow the Prophet, in the fourth place, in his prediction of what that result was to be. While he is contemplating his being "cut off from the land of the living," "who," says he, "shall declare his generation?" As when it was said by the two disciples, on the road to Emmaus, "We trusted it had been he, who should have redeemed Israel,"^c—but his death had come as an eclipse over such hopes: so here: it seemed as though, instead of being that head of the redeemed human family, whose seed was to be as the stars of Heaven, and as the sand upon the sea-shore for multitude, he had been cut off, root and branch, had left no "generation," no posterity after him! But no. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall *see his seed.*" Not only, *notwithstanding* his death, but, *through the means* of that his expiatory death, a seed was to be raised up to him. From "the travail of his soul," those were to be born to him, who would "satisfy" him for all his travail. As in his own words—"A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world;"^d or, as in that other passage, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit:"^e or, as when he says, without a figure, "If I be lifted up from the earth, (signifying what death he should die,) I will draw all men unto me."^f Through his death for sin, he was to "justify many" from

^c Luke xxiv. 21.

^e John xii. 24.

^d John xvi. 21.

^f John xii. 32.

their sins. He was to be “made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”^g—that, in him, sinners might be accounted and accepted before God, as righteous.

In like manner, in the verse with which the chapter concludes, he is described, not only notwithstanding his death, but in consequence of it, as a mighty conqueror: “Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, *because* he poured forth his soul unto death.” As in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “Through death he overcame him who had the power of death.” He entered into that house of the strong man, the grave, and took away from him the armour wherein he trusted—took away sin, and spoiled his goods—set those free, whom he, whom the strength of *sin* had made so strong, had held in bondage! As in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians,—“Having spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them upon the cross.” Or, as in that yet fuller description of the humiliation and subsequent exaltation of the Saviour, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians,—“Because he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, came in the likeness of men, humbled himself, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, *therefore* hath God highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

The anxious question now arises, Who they are, that have the benefit of the humiliation and triumph of the Saviour? We are supplied also, here, with the answer to the

question—"By his knowledge," says the Prophet,—“by the *knowledge* of him, shall my righteous servant justify many.” For “this is eternal life,” as says the Saviour,—“to *know* thee, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”^h As it was the Apostle’s prayer for the Ephesians, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the *knowledge* of Christ.”ⁱ—As, for himself, there was no desire so near his heart, as that he might “know” his Divine Saviour, ever more and more, and “the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.”^j To those to whom St. Peter wrote, his last written words were, “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”^k “If thou *knewest* the gift of God,” said the Saviour to the woman of Samaria,—“if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”^l

For why is it that men are alienated from God and from Christ, but “through the *ignorance* that is in them,” says the Apostle—that they have “the understanding darkened” “because of the blindness of their hearts?”^m The chapter opens with the lamentation to what an extent such ignorance, and blindness, and darkness prevail—“Who hath believed our report?” We hear from the Evangelist in the thirteenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel, at the thirty-seventh verse, what cause there was for such a complaint; that though the Saviour “had done so many miracles among them, yet they believed not on him, that the saying of “Esaias,” (as adds the Evangelist) “might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report?” In the same manner the Apostle, in the application of the

^h John xvii. 3.ⁱ Eph. i. 17.^j Phil. iii. 10.^k 2 Peter iii. 18.^l John iv. 10.^m Eph. iv. 18.

passage—"How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings"—to the promulgation of the Gospel, accounts for the rejection of the Gospel by so many—"For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"ⁿ

But who are they, the question follows us—who are they, who *do* believe the report of the Gospel; who *have* that knowledge of the Saviour, through which they have the benefit of his humiliation and triumph? We learn from the words that follow, that they are those, to whom "the arm of the Lord"—to whom, under the guise of weakness and foolishness, the power and wisdom of God in the Gospel are "revealed:" are *revealed*, I say—as we hear from our Lord in the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him." As he had said just before, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Those who truly know and believe these things, are the babes to whom they are revealed.

Is it asked how, otherwise than in the *written* revelation, they are revealed to them? Let us turn to the second chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us, by his *Spirit*. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God."

They are those, then, to whom Christ is revealed, not in

ⁿ Rom. x. 15, 16.

the word only, but also by the Spirit of the Lord, who have the benefit of his sufferings and victory. And think, think what that benefit is!—that through what he suffered for sin, they are justified from their sins; and through his victory over death, are conquerors of death, themselves—that with respect to the former, they can ask fearlessly, “Who is he that condemneth?”^o and with respect to the latter, can take up the other triumphant challenge, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”^p

But neither have we yet brought out all the fruit and benefit, which, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is derived to us. Have we had it before us, that “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth?” Let us now turn to St. Peter’s application of this exhibition of patience and meekness, to ourselves—“If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.”^q Such a restoration would the Saviour see effected in us, through the gift and operation of that Divine Spirit which, by his precious death, he hath obtained for us, that, instead of walking in the steps, and following the example of the world around us, being thus made partakers of his own Divine nature, we should follow His example, walk in His steps;—that while we have the hope springing up within us, of seeing him, as he is, hereafter, we should be becoming more and more like him here, purifying ourselves as he is

^o Rom. viii. 34.

^p 1 Cor. xv. 55.

^q 1 Pet. ii. 20—24.

pure, in the blessed prospect of shining as the sun with him in the kingdom of his Father!

In what terms, then, is their blessed state to be described, my brethren, who, through faith in Christ, through the Divinely-inspired knowledge of him, have a personal interest in his humiliation and victory—who, if they look back, see all the past forgiven them; if they look forward, see death disarmed, and Heaven opened to them; and who, at the present moment, are growing up into that likeness to Christ, which, as they approach to it, is a Heaven upon earth to them!

Or is it, that recent sin, that the consciousness of having fallen since they “tasted that the Lord was gracious,” clouds their hopes and disturbs their peace? But is there not the same provision for their *recovery* of peace, as there was for their first attainment of it? Is not He who “made intercession for the transgressors” upon the cross, making it for them still, before the throne of God? They have the same atoning blood and prevailing intercession to fly to, to the last, as at first.

It is not—as in the creed of another Church, with respect to the disastrous errors and corruptions of which we are no longer permitted to preserve unbroken silence—it is not, as though for sins in the after-life—for sins *after baptism*, as they teach—we were referred to other satisfactions, supplementary to that of Christ—as if for such sins we wanted a second plank, (as it is termed in the Council of Trent,) a second plank by which to escape from shipwreck, and which has been provided for us, as they feign, in the so-called sacrament of penance, with its *human* works, and merits, and satisfactions.—But when “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,” for what iniquities of ours, for what transgressions, was he *not* bruised and wounded? When “he bore the sin of many,”

when “the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all,” what iniquity was *not* laid upon him, what sin did he *not* bear? Of what distinction, what reservation, what exception, do we hear? Blessed be God, of *none!* “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin.”^r Christ’s intercession, exclusive of any other, prevails for the forgiveness of *all* sin—and for as long as we are liable to fall into sin.

Nor is there any more foundation, as we are here also reminded, for that other distinction, by which the peace of the forgiven sinner, and the grace of the Saviour, are darkened;—that while, as it is taught in that dark creed, Christ satisfied for the *eternal* punishment due to sin, it is left for the sinner himself to make satisfaction, either in this life, or in a fabled purgatory, for the *temporal* punishment which is due to it. But was not “the chastisement of our peace”—the chastisement, of what kind soever, that sin demanded, and which, for our enjoyment of peace with God, it was necessary should be inflicted—was it not inflicted upon, and has it not been exhausted by the suffering Saviour? When he bowed the head, and said—“It is finished”^s—the whole punishment had been sustained, which was due from sinners for sin. The penal cup had been drunk to its last dregs: satisfaction made to the uttermost farthing! In *consequence* of sin, it is true, we may suffer much; but nothing remains to be suffered, to make *satisfaction* for sin.

What remains for *us*, if we be called to suffer, is, that we should be made more and more like Christ, by what we suffer, and *unlike* ourselves; that, as gold in the fire, we should be becoming purged from our own dross, and that the character and mind of Christ should be progressively forming in us; that we should suffer as *He*

^r 1 John i. 7.

^s John xix. 30.

suffered. Ah! yes. Whether it be to suffer, we be called, or to act, is it not for us—(or do we want encouragement—or is it motives we want?)—is it not for us, to be still endeavouring to be faithful representatives upon earth of Him who, having made himself our representative upon the Cross first, is still appearing for us, as through whom alone, from first to last, there is acceptance for us, before the throne of God? Is it not for us, in a world opposed to him, to be still endeavouring to be as He was in it—to be, in his own spirit, and by a walk like his own, recommending continually, and advancing his cause and kingdom, in the world? Happy, while such the object which we propose to ourselves in life, though in the prosecution of it we should be called to suffer! He thought so, however, who said, “But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye!”^t

And can I be addressing an individual, who would not desire to have part in all this blessedness—faint and feeble as may be his apprehension of it—in this peace with God, this recovery from the deformity of sin, this victory over death, and the hope beyond it, which through his sufferings and victory our Divine Redeemer has achieved for our ruined race? And will you not, then, secure for yourself an interest in it? For “whosoever *will*, let him come”—does he not say? Almost the concluding words they are of the Bible—and what last words!—“whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.”^u “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye!”^v It is only because they “will not *come* to me, that they might have life,”^w (does not the blessed Saviour say?) that any are lost. “Look unto me”—He is at this instant, by the mouth of his minister, saying it—“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of

^t 1 Pet. iii. 14.

^u Rev. xxii. 17.

^v Isa. lv. 1.

^w John v. 40.

the earth."^x As we cannot look at the sun, without its shining upon us, as surely as we look to the Saviour, the light of salvation breaks in upon us. Let the chief of sinners look upon him whom he pierced,—and with healing, for that piercing, the Saviour will requite him! And will you remain of the number of those who hide their faces from him?

And shall we be content, my Christian brethren, that our fellow-sinners should hide their faces from him? But is it not for us, for their own sake, as well as that the Saviour may see his seed coming in, the fruit of the travail of his soul multiplying, may have more and more to "satisfy" him—is it not for us to be in prayer continually, (as in one of the collects for the day we are so impressively reminded,^y) that to those who are alienated from him through the ignorance that is in them because of the darkness of their understandings and the blindness of their hearts, "the arm of the Lord may be revealed"—that to more and more of our own congregation, to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge of him around us, that to those upon the continent who are beginning to open their eyes and break their bonds, that to those who are sitting in heathen darkness and the shadow of death, and to those by whose fathers he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, there may be, through the word and Spirit of the Lord, a revelation of Him upon whom "the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all?"—It is for us to be still joining our supplicatory intercession to his own meritorious intercession, that "the pleasure of the Lord" may more and more "prosper in his hand!"

I am unwilling to conclude, (for on this day, if ever, we may be permitted to exceed somewhat our usual limits,) I am unwilling to conclude, in the immediate prospect of

^x Isa. xlv. 22.

^y Third Collect for Good Friday.

the sacramental commemoration of the great subject of this chapter, without adding a few words in reference to it.

It is not a little gratifying to see so large a proportion of the congregation, not only upon such occasions as that which is now approaching, but as often as the opportunity is presented, taking part in the celebration. For is there not reason always to fear, that those who turn away from the Lord's table, are hiding their faces from the Lord himself? Though it may not be, that He has "no form nor comeliness" for them, that they see "no beauty in him that they should desire him," yet at the time, it is too plain (in the greater number of cases, however,) that they are under a stronger attraction from another quarter, that they see greater beauty in other objects, that they are more disposed to be in communion with what the eye sees, and the ear hears, with what is in the region of sense, than with Him who would call them out of the world of sense, into the spiritual world.

And of what advantages for their Christian course do they not deprive themselves, who are content with being occasional communicants! For when we speak of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, as a commemorative rite, as no more than the *commemoration* of the sacrifice of Christ, it is in contradistinction to what is so extravagantly taught, of his *bodily* presence being in the sacrament, and that as often as the sacrament is administered, the propitiatory sacrifice is *repeated*; that he is offered up by a sacrificing priesthood, as he offered up himself. But it is not intended to exclude from the sacrament the *virtue* of the sacrifice—of the one sacrifice once offered. Oh! no. "This"—this bread "is my body,—this cup is my blood,"^z in *virtue*, assuredly, as well as representatively. To as many as *really* partake of this blessed sacrament—in faith,

* Mark xiv. 22—24.

that is—there is a renewed application of all the benefits of the *sacrifice*, an actual and present participation in Christ's death. To such, "the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ, the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ."^a

Let there be faith—if, however, it be a lively faith, faith not immersed in earthly things, with its eye not dimmed by an unrestrained familiarity with the things of sense, but clear to see what eye hath not seen—let us with the lamp of faith trimmed, with our spiritual perceptions clear and awake, with our spiritual senses applied and exercised, approach this holy sacrament, and we may hope to be in such communion with Him, who, though absent indeed in body, is in his sacrament, if ever, present in spirit, as to have the present enjoyment, *the real presence* of the benefits of the precious death and passion which we commemorate. And shall we, then, be satisfied—not to speak of the habitual neglect of the Lord's table—but with uncertain and irregular attendance at it, shall we satisfy ourselves?

Ah! and to those, also, who have habitually neglected it, I cannot content myself without saying, what this chapter of itself so abundantly authorises us to say to them, that there is nothing in all that is past,—let them appear at it now in the true wedding garment, as those who would be indeed saved from their sins by Christ,—there is nothing in all their past neglect and sin, for which they need fear a repulse. Blessed be the God of all grace, no past sin, nor yet the consciousness of present sinful weakness and corruption, is any disqualification, let there be, also, a present flying from sin to Christ!

And here I would conclude, as with an application, in which the whole chapter, in all its grace, comes back upon us:—in its grace, extending to the chief of sinners, and to

^a 1 Cor. x. 16.

all manner of sin—the grace which is *commemorated*, (and more than commemorated,) in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, as it was *obtained* by the sacrifice of the cross.

The Lord grant to us, my brethren, that, whether it be in the sacramental memorial, or in the ministry of the Gospel without it, this grace is exhibited, we may never be among those who “hide their faces” from it, but that it may be from what would obstruct the view of the Saviour we hide our face; that while in Him, who has been now “set forth crucified among us,”^b those who are under the influence of the spirit of the world, and not of his own, see no form or comeliness, no beauty that they should desire him, *we* may see no beauty—no, but deformity and hatefulness, in whatsoever is opposed to him; that we may turn away from whatsoever would draw our hearts from him, from what would, for one instant, come in competition in our regard with “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord!”^c

Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour, ourselves, to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life: through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.^d

^b Gal. iii. 1.

^c Phil. iii. 8.

^d Collect for Second Sunday after Easter.

The Crucifixion.

(THE SUBSTANCE OF AN EXPOSITION DELIVERED AT ROME.)

LUKE xxiii. 32—43.

“ And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

“ And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

“ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them ! for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

“ And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others ; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

“ And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar.

“ And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

“ And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

“ And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

“ But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ?

“ And we indeed justly ; for we receive the due reward of our deeds : but this man hath done nothing amiss.

“ And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

“ And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

PERHAPS marble was never made to express human agony, as in the celebrated statue of the Laocoon. You see the serpent's poison working in every muscle, envenoming the blood in every vein,—while the like frightful contortions in the two sons, and the shrieks and cries for help which you seem to hear ejaculated by them, aggravate the horror to the spectator, though the father is incapable of attending to them ! *The father*—nature's capacity of suffering seems

exhausted by what he suffers himself! In his convulsed features and writhing limbs, it is his own intense agony that is expressed—there is no effort to wrench the folds which are clasping his children—no, not so much as a father's eye turned towards them! It is not any fault of the sculptor. It is the incapacity of the subject. We see the limits beyond which mere human nature cannot exercise its sympathies.

Let us now turn to another spectacle of suffering—and the utmost ingenuity of cruelty never perhaps produced an instrument of keener torture than the Cross! yet, in the case of our Divine Redeemer, the bodily torture was as nothing, in comparison of what his soul was enduring—in comparison of what drew from him that prayer, in the apprehension of it, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”—and that other cry, when he was under it, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The Saviour's soul had then upon it, the accumulated sin—“the iniquity of us all.” It was the hour of the power of darkness. Round the Saviour's soul, the *infernal* serpent was then coiling himself!

Yet, under such excruciating bodily torture, and the weight, passing all conception, that was weighing down his soul, behold the Saviour! We read in the nineteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, verse 25, &c.,—“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

His eye could turn towards one, to whose sorrows He was not insensible, in the extremity of his own—but he can, at

that moment, occupy himself with providing alleviation for them!

Again—Luke xxiii. verses 39 to 43,—“And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” In the hell through which He was passing, his ear was open to the voice of prayer, to the prayer of one, whom his crimes had brought to that end—In the midst of what he had to contend with himself, he clasps the dying penitent to his bosom, as though he had nothing else to occupy him! Nay, does He not seem to experience personal relief, in the promise which He makes to him, of passing from the Cross to Paradise?

Again, in the thirty-third verse, while they are piercing his hands and his feet, and adding to the infamy of the Cross itself, what further indignity they could, in the associates of his crucifixion, his heart beats with love towards them, his lips open in prayer for them—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

While everything about the *statue* expresses what is *personal*—the whole man concentrated upon himself—everything about the *Cross* expresses that, as it was for *us* the blessed victim hung upon it, so even under the execution of the sentence to which He subjected himself—even while He was wringing out the bitterest dregs of his bitter cup—while hell was doing its worst to afflict him, and Heaven withheld itself from relieving him—every word,

every look of the suffering Saviour announces, that it was of *us* he was then thinking, and not of himself!

Well might the centurion exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Might it not have been added to Pilate's superscription—nay, cannot we read it without any superscription—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee!"

And is He not then one to trust? And to trust in Him is to be saved by Him!—as surely as was the dying thief. Yes—let us be able only to say with truth, "O Lord, in Thee have I trusted"—and we may without hesitation add, "I shall never be confounded!"

And is He not, I say, one to trust? If we read, (as in the twenty-second Psalm,) before any such unveiling of the Divine character, "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them: they cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded"—if even before any such opening of the heart of God, he was yet such an object of confidence to the believers of old time, what reason have not we to confide in Him, after the spectacle which the Cross presents?

Or, is He become—is our Divine Saviour become another, since He sat down on the right hand of God? Is He then like those among ourselves, who, when they are advanced and successful in life, become cold towards the companions of their less prosperous circumstances, and will no longer acknowledge connexions that remind them of their former obscurity? But behold our exalted Saviour in his representative in his glory in Egypt! Could not Joseph refrain himself before all them that stood by—wept he aloud as his bowels yearned upon his brethren—if God had made

him a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt, was it not for the opportunity which was thus afforded him of providing in the coming years of famine for his brethren, and of saving their lives by a great deliverance, that the situation to which he had been advanced in Egypt was valued by him ?

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to preserve life, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God. . . . Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee.”

And what provision will not *our* brother—for is it not even to the same relation that he admits us?—what provision will not our brother upon the throne of Heaven make for his brethren in the time of famine—in all the distress and destitution and want, to which they are subject? Did he—and under such circumstances—provide another son for his bereaved mother? And is it difficult to believe that his eye *now* turns to those whom He regards in the relation of “brother, sister, mother?” But do not we read, that “when He shall come in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory, and all his holy angels with

him," it is those He will acknowledge as his own, who shall have been to his necessitous brethren, like what John was to Mary—"Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." Again: did He—and at such a moment—open the gates of Paradise to the dying thief—and is it difficult to believe, that He now exercises the same mercy towards others like him? Did He, while hanging upon the Cross, intercede for those who were nailing him to it—and is it difficult to believe that he is able—or is it that he is not willing—"to save those to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them?" Was it, then, upon insufficient ground, the Apostle said it of himself—"the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me?"

Have we not ground, I say, for trusting in Him—in Him who loved us, and gave himself for us, who even upon the Cross was not unmindful of us, who at this moment is making intercession for us? And thus to trust in him, (let it be repeated,) is to be saved by Him: that it is thus his salvation becomes our own: that it is "by this faith the just live," have peace with God, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!

I would only remark, further, upon the change of *nature* which takes place in those who, by the exercise of such faith, acquire a personal interest in the Saviour, are ingrafted, incorporated into him, become branches of the Heavenly Vine, partakers of the root and fatness of the Divine Olive Tree—that, "as He is, even so are they in this world"—that they become partakers of his own nature. Take for example, with reference to the part of his Divine character which has been now before us, what we read in the third chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians,

verses 7, 8, and 9:—"Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress, by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." In sympathy with others could the Apostles be, in the midst of the affliction and distress in which they were plunged themselves: Nay—it was as balm to their wounds, light in the darkness of their own circumstances, to hear of the faith of their converts, that they stood fast in the Lord—"What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God"—in their personal "affliction and distress!"

So that we have before us, so to speak, Christianity itself, which, on our part, consists altogether in *trust*—trust, which it is the object of the whole Bible to produce in us—in that trust in our Saviour Christ, which stretches out the hand to lay hold upon him, by which his merits are apprehended by us, his blood is sprinkled upon the conscience, we stand before God in his righteousness, God no longer regards us as we are in ourselves, but in His beloved Son, to whom, through such trust in Him, we become united, incorporated with him.

And as by such an application and appropriation of the merits of Christ, we are *accounted* righteous before God; through the operation of the same principle, in virtue of the conjunction thus formed with him, we are, at the same time, *made* righteous. As *He* is full of grace, out of his fulness we all receive.—As, with respect to the distinguishing characteristic of our Divine Redeemer which we have been this day contemplating, springs of sympathy, altogether beyond that of nature, are opened within us, we become capable, in the midst of the keenest sorrows of our own, of participating in those of others; nay, and of forgetting ourselves, in the attempt to dry the tears of others.

And who would not, then, be a Christian? who would not live, that is, in the enjoyment of sweet peace and bright hope for himself, and in the exercise of Christ's own sympathy, as Christ himself lived, in his intercourse and in all his relations with others?

SERMON XVIII.

THE RESURRECTION.

(PREACHED ON EASTER SUNDAY.)

PHILIPPIANS iii. part of verse 10.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”

ON the late solemn day of national humiliation,^a a promise which was addressed to those against whom the Prophet had been directed to “lift up his voice as a trumpet, to show them their transgressions and their sins”—the gracious promise, which accompanied the denunciations, that if they kept such a fast as God had chosen, “their light should yet break forth as the morning,”^b was applied for our own encouragement, under circumstances not dissimilar.

Oh! and that in the present instance, in answer to the prayers of that day—not unaccompanied, we have the comfort to think, neither here nor elsewhere, with “the drawing out the soul to the hungry”^c—the gracious promise may be fulfilled! God in his mercy grant, as in the address to us upon that occasion it was so earnestly desired, that the light of Gospel-truth may break forth, as well as that of temporal relief, upon those, who, while they are perishing

^a March 24, 1847.

^b Isa. lviii. 1, 8.

^c Isa. lviii. 10.

with hunger, are in yet more deplorable *spiritual* destitution!

While we are commemorating the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour from the dead, such breaking forth of light in obscurity seems nothing new. Even while I speak, is there not, for those who have been now following in the track of their Divine Redeemer as “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,”^d “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness?”^e For what is there not, after the contemplation of the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, in the announcement of this morning—is there not the *Gospel* of the Gospel in it—that “Christ has risen from the dead.”^f

All surrounding nature seems to echo it—even as it was in sympathy with its Lord, while he *suffered*—presenting, in its universal revival, most expressive and surely not undesigned emblems of the resurrection. The sun returning with its genial warmth and exhilarating brightness, the fields recovering their verdure, the trees putting forth their leaves, the birds resuming their song, the corn, which “had fallen into the ground and died,” springing up to “bring forth much fruit,”^g the opening flowers—all speak language, even like that of the white-robed angels in the sepulchre—all, in their manner, preach to us “Jesus and the resurrection!”^h

To know “the power of this his resurrection,” in ourselves, is what is desired in the passage before us—and so to know more and more of it. For it was not by one who was as yet *without* knowledge of it, the desire was expressed.

The fact itself, as a fact, resting upon incontestable

^d Isa. liii. 3.

^e Isa. lxi. 3.

^f 1 Cor. xv. 20.

^g John xii. 24.

^h Acts xvii. 18.

evidence, we may know, as any other fact. Nor is there yet, in its aspect towards ourselves, as it is a mere theological question, any obscurity. The Lord of glory dies! what can this mean? "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."ⁱ But behold him, rising from the dead! What is this, but that the load under which he had sunk has been removed—that "by the sacrifice of himself he has put away sin!"^j Is an angel sent to remove the stone from the door of the sepulchre? The law having no further demand against the prisoner, an officer of Heaven comes to open the prison-doors. And as it was for *us*, we are still to remember, he had become responsible—as it was *our* representative he was—in the discharge of our surety, is included our own: as surely as he was released from those bands which were the "wages of sin,"^k so are we, as many as believe in him, from the bands of sin. "He was raised again, for our justification."^l

But to admit the fact, as also the blessed consequences that flow from it, is one thing; to have an interest in it ourselves—"to know," as the Apostle desired to know, "the power of his resurrection" in the application of it to ourselves—is another. It may be admitted further—as admitted universally it is, as an article of faith—that "Christ is risen as the first-fruits of them that slept,"^m as the conqueror of death, as well as of sin, for us; and yet, alas! it is too possible to have no part, all the while, either in the one victory, or in the other.

All men indeed will be raised, by the power which Christ will exercise as the judge of quick and dead. "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth."ⁿ But the resurrection of those who know not the power of his own—it will be, as when the

ⁱ Isa. liii. 6.^j Heb. ix. 26.^k Rom. vi. 23.^l Rom. iv. 25.^m 1 Cor. xv. 20.ⁿ John v. 28, 29.

condemned criminal is led forth from his prison, to the place of execution.

The resurrection, of the power of which the Apostle desired to have such experience, has its beginning in this present life ; begins as in a new creation *within*—according to that his description of it, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, “ God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”^o It is not only that he will, but that he “ *has* quickened us, and raised us up together with Christ.”

Our subject then is, what is “ the power,” of which, in the risen Saviour, we become in this present life, the subjects ? What it is, do we ask ?—It is no other than that which was exerted in the rising Saviour himself ! Even in that power, by which he loosed the bands by which it was impossible he should be holden, burst forth from under the cloud of darkness and the shadow of death as “ the resurrection and the life,” out of the depths into which he had sunk ascended into the highest Heavens, by which, while Satan bruised his heel, *he* crushed Satan’s head—it is in this very and same power of God, “ which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named,”^p that as many as are in Christ have a present participation. No wonder such a prayer as that for the Ephesians—“ that they might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe !”^q For that, through the sympathy and union which subsist between himself and those who are his, as between a living head and the body that belongs to it, all the vital energy

^o Eph. ii. 4—6.

^p Eph. i. 20, 21.

^q Eph. i. 18, 19.

which is in himself, is communicated to and diffused throughout his members.

Such was "the power of the resurrection," of which the Apostle desired to experience the operation in himself—as who would not, who knew as he did, what was depending?—"That I may know the power of his resurrection," he says, "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."^r It is those who become the subjects of the *present* "power of the resurrection," and no others, who are the heirs of the resurrection to eternal life and glory. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you," (as speaks the Apostle elsewhere,) "he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."^s

But neither is it a subject, of which the *general* view is to satisfy us. Let us follow it out, in some of the various phenomena in which this "the power of the resurrection" manifests itself.

Have you seen a man, who had lived as without God in the world, who had seemed to have no other thought than how he should enjoy himself in the world, advance himself in the world, enrich himself in the world, provide for his family in the world—*now* having no other thought than how he shall live to the glory of God, and for the benefit of others? There you saw "the power of the resurrection!"

Have you ever seen one, not knowing what it was to have a respite from pain and suffering, the prey of pining and hopeless disease, exhausted, emaciated, yet invisibly supported; while the outward man was decaying, in undecaying vigour in the inner man; the languid eye lighted up with an animation not its own, the sinking frame new-strung? There you saw "the power of the resurrection!"—as the Apostle describes it, "Troubled on every side, yet not

^r Phil. iii. 11.

^s Rom. viii. 11.

distressed ; cast down, but not destroyed ; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”^t

Or, when the question has been, whether to suffer, or sin—whether to lose all in this world, or the hope beyond it—and those so tempted—no, “have not *accepted* deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection !”^u

Oh ! and what has it not been to the desolate and bereaved, to a “Rachel weeping for her children,”^v to one, who had lost, it may have been, for a time, all the heritage and gift given her of the Lord, all the olive-branches that once bloomed around her table—what life, as from the dead, has it not given her, to believe that as “Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him”^w—that it will be for her to say it yet, “Behold me, and the children which God hath given me !”^x

And what have we not heard of those, who, when their own hour was approaching, so far from starting at what was before them, have panted to be gone, have looked upon death as a messenger, not of evil but of glad tidings, as one sent to say to them, “The Master calleth for thee !”^y For, has not this our last enemy, through Him who has overcome it, become to those who are His, even what Goliath was to the Israelites, when David had slain him ? For as many as are Christ’s, the venomous serpent has no venom more, that they can see it approach them, and not start—nay, and let it hiss at them, as it may, can yet say exultingly, “Where is thy sting ?”^z

And what hear we not of the part of us, also, which is not yet exempt from its power—of our earthly and mortal part itself ? What, but that if it be “sown in corrup-

^t 2 Cor. iv. 8—10.

^u Heb. xi. 35.

^v Matt. ii. 18.

^w 1 Thess. iv. 14.

^x Heb. ii. 13.

^y John xi. 28.

^z 1 Cor. xv. 55.

tion," it shall be as surely "raised in incorruption;" if it be "sown in weakness," that it shall be "raised in power;" that if it be "sown in dishonour," it shall be "raised in glory;"^a—that the body which is about to be the prey of worms, shall yet be in companionship with angels; that what is about to moulder into dust, shall yet "shine as the sun!"^b For though it be with the *present* "power of the resurrection" we are more immediately occupied, it can never be dissociated in the mind, from the perfect consummation and bliss of those who are the subjects of it, both in body and soul, in the eternal and everlasting glory which will succeed.

I may be addressing those, who, as they have hung over a grave, in which had been deposited what perhaps was most precious to them upon earth, could realise, that out of that same grave would start up a body "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body,"^c—who, while the earth was being committed to its kindred earth, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," seemed to see the seed dropped into the ground, which was about to spring up into glory and immortality.

To the inquiry, then, what "the power of the resurrection" is, of which the Apostle was so desirous to have more and more experience, some answer has been attempted, as well in the reference to instances in which it is exerted and manifested, as in the identification of it with that by which the Saviour was raised triumphant himself. And what is it, then, but the life of GOD, and the hope of glory within us!—A power it is, under the influence of which, while we are in our earthly tabernacle, we are, in a manner, as if we were *out* of it; which makes us to live, as in heavenly places, even *now*, as risen with Christ; to see present things as with other than our present eyes; to be affected towards the world in which we are, as were the three disciples while they

^a 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.

^b Matt. xiii. 43.

^c Phil. iii. 21.

saw the glory in the Mount;^d and to pass through the world, to fill our place in it, to enter into our relations with it, and discharge our duties to it, as under the power of the world to come! And am I addressing none, to whom I might appeal as witnesses of such the present “power of the resurrection”—“children of God, being” (as speaks the Saviour,) “the children of the resurrection!”^e For that, even as he was himself “declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead,”^f there is a like testimony to our sonship by adoption, in the *spiritual* resurrection.

That such present exceptions to the ordinary and prevailing character, it is too true. As “sons of God,” “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,” they are described to be—“as lights”^g shining in darkness! For what, alas! see we all around us, but men, women, and children, under a power, which, so far from making them mount up with wings, chains them down—under the power and in the chains of the flesh!

What a momentous question is it then to put—Have you broken loose from this the power of death? Has the soul come forth at the call, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead?”^h *Has* it? But whence, then, whence, if it be so, the utter insensibility to whatever is not of this world, while there is such sympathy with what *is*? While the whole soul kindles at what this world presents, whence the coldness, the deadness, to the things of the unseen world?

And is it, then, that with this, the power and glory of the resurrection, before us, infatuated men prefer for their portion, that the serpent’s curse—“upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life?”ⁱ

^d Matt. xvii. 1—4.

^e Luke xx. 36.

^f Rom. i. 4.

^g Phil. ii. 15.

^h Eph. v. 14.

ⁱ Gen. iii. 14.

Till we know "the power of the resurrection," things are in an inverted order within us: Heaven below, and earth above. It is earth that seems great, Heaven is as a speck. But in the soul that has come under "the power of the resurrection," the true order is restored. There earth subsides; what relates to Heaven ascends. Earth becomes the speck, Heaven appears what Heaven is!

Is it so with *us*? What is, then, let it be asked, what is the habitual bent, the prevailing current, of thought? In what channel, as the most congenial, do the thoughts run, what direction do they take, when they are disengaged from the pressure of ordinary occupation? Are they still chained down? Do they still trail along the ground? Are they mere bearers and carriers of loads and burdens of thick clay? Are they as in the continual service and always going upon the errands of the body and the animal man—the degraded drudges of sensual and worldly lusts?

The thoughts of a child of the resurrection are ever, as by the instinct of his risen nature, taking wing and flying upwards. By the flight and power of thought, he "sits in heavenly places,"^j while he is yet upon earth. His thoughts, winged with faith, and hope, and love, are still ascending to where He is who attracts them; and descend, the same winged messengers, "with healing in their wings," as beams from "the Sun of righteousness,"^k as glances from the light of his countenance, with answers of joy and peace. Are such ascending and descending messengers not unknown to ourselves? or, however, has that prayer in our church collect, that, "as our Lord Jesus Christ has ascended into the Heavens, so we may, also, in heart and mind, thither ascend, and with him continually dwell"^l—has such a prayer become our own? or, to put the question in another form—in that suggested by the epistle for the

^j Eph. ii. 6.

^k Mal. iv. 2.

^l Collect for Ascension Day.

day^m—are we “seeking those things which are above, setting our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth?” For that “if we be risen with Christ,” (as is the Apostle’s thought,) our heart and treasure will be, where He is himself. Is it then towards spiritual or towards sensual pleasures we are attracted? Would we be for accumulating earthly or heavenly riches—“add house to house, field to field,”ⁿ and the like, would we—or, add to our faith virtue,^o and to virtue all that will make us rich towards God?

I have put the question variously—one of such eternal moment to us it is—no less being involved in it, than, whether it be the germ of the resurrection to glory that is within us, or of the resurrection to everlasting shame and contempt!

And yet—or how could we even contemplate the alternative? nay, let there be supposed a state that would seem *desperate*—(for “where sin has abounded, has not grace abounded *beyond* it?”^p)—though, in what is passing within, the “worm that dieth not” should seem to have begun its gnawings, and “the fire unquenchable”^q to be already kindled, though the elements of Hell should seem to be within, no reason is there—let the grace which is at this season commemorated, be responded to—but that Heaven may yet open, in that same bosom! For what has been passing in review before us, during the past week, but the judgment which had been incurred by our sin, executed upon another, in our stead; our condemnation sustained by another for us? And what have we this day before us, but those “quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places, who were dead in trespasses and sins?”^r

^m Col. iii. 1, 2.

ⁿ Isa. v. 8.

^o 2 Pet. i. 5.

^p Rom. v. 20.

^q Mark ix. 44.

^r Eph. ii. 1, 5, 6.

Be we who we may, and what we may, let us only, in a just sense of our guilt, of our need, of our danger, cast ourselves upon this our Divine Redeemer, run to him, lean upon him, trust in him, take shelter under him, say to him, Thou art my refuge, my only refuge—thou art my hope, my only hope! and, as for whom there is the power of his *life*, as well as the riches of his *grace*, “herein exercise ourselves to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men,”^s—let us approach our Divine Redeemer thus—as who, while we cast ourselves upon his mercy, would fight in his strength against all sin—and all the mercy which his precious blood-shedding has purchased, is *ours*; and, in his glorious resurrection, we have the pledge and assurance of our own.

Come *then* what may—do we see death approaching—we shall see no king of terrors in it! It will be no longer, as when the judgment-stricken king of Israel said to the prophet, “Hast thou found me, O mine *enemy*?”^t—While faith has Christ in its arms, it can clasp death itself in them, as come to perform the office of a friend; as by whose hand the veil is rent between the life yet struggling in the flesh, and “the being with Christ.”^u

And can there be happiness, my brethren, whatever may wear the garb of it, for beings who have an eternity of existence before them, and who may at any moment be launched into that eternity, till they can look at eternity with the eye of Gospel hope? Can we be really happy, till the Gospel of grace, and life, and immortality shall have disarmed terrible death of its terror for us, and that we can imagine ourselves upon the brink of the eternal world, and “fear no evil?”^v

Were we, any of us, where, with its two-edged scythe of famine and pestilence, death is now mowing down its

^s Acts xxiv. 16. ^t 1 Kings xxi. 20. ^u Phil. i. 23. ^v Psa. xxiii. 4.

thousands and tens of thousands, and that we knew not but that we might be the next victims ourselves, what would it not be to be able to regard it as sent on no commission of *judgment* to us; that while we had no exemption from the *mortality*, we had an exemption from the *evil*; that, dark as might be the cloud on the one side, it had a *bright* side for *us*—for that He came to us in it, who had “overcome death, and opened to us the gate of everlasting life!”^w

Let us now draw near to where our Divine Redeemer comes to certify us of this his grace, that “there is no condemnation for us”—to certify us of “his favour and goodness towards us, and that we are heirs of his everlasting kingdom, through the merits of his own most precious death and passion for us.” Let us draw near, opening our hearts to all the encouragement, which through those merits, and that most precious death and passion, there is for those who may regard themselves as utterly unworthy. For, though the table is spread for no others than such as are alive from the dead—for how should any be capable of spiritual *sustenance* to whom spiritual *life* had not been communicated—yet the question, with respect to qualification, is not, whether the pulse beat strong, but whether it beat at all—whether there be the *appetite* for the bread of life, and the hand be put forth, emptied of what it had been grasping, to receive what Christ will put into it.

Am I addressing any, overwhelmed with a sense of unworthiness—or deterred by it, I should rather say, from approaching? for overwhelmed in the consciousness of our sins and deservings, we may well be, every one of us! Do you, then, forget the feast that was made for “the Prodigal?”^x And, though *you* may have been a prodigal,

* Collect for Easter Sunday.

* Luke xv. 23.

it is not for you, on that account, to exclude yourself from the Christian feast. For your Saviour does not therefore exclude you from it. Let it be remembered, only, that it was not while the prodigal was in "the far country, feeding the swine, and living upon the husks," that the feast was prepared for him. Come out from the "far country"—out from the sty of sensuality.—Let "the husks" of frivolity and vanity be your unworthy portion no more; and desire to be what the prodigal *became*: for can we not see him, after that his reception, as though he were still hearing, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him," as if he were in his father's arms still—do not we seem to see him watching every glance of that eye which had beamed such love and mercy upon him, as if he would interpret every expression of his father's countenance, from which he might gather, "What he would have him to do?" Come, as he did—as one who "was dead, but is alive again"—as one who "was lost, but is found;" as who would now live to the glory, as you did before to the dishonour of God—and, as it is for Christ's minister to assure you of a welcome at *that* table, another voice will welcome you, at the Easter that is coming, to another banquet, even to sit down with the whole company of the redeemed, in their robes of glory and immortality, at the eternal "supper of the Lamb."³

³ Rev. xix. 9.



SERMON XIX.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 CORINTHIANS xi. 23—32.

“For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread :

“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body, which is broken for you ; This do in remembrance of me.

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.

“Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

“But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

CAN we hear this passage, and not be impressed with the extreme importance which is attached in it, to the ordinance of which it treats ? We have not only the account in it, as in the Gospels, of the institution of the Lord's supper—an

account from which, alone, the importance of it sufficiently appears—but we hear further, that it was also the subject of express and distinct revelation to the Apostle: “For I have received of the LORD,” he says, “that which I delivered unto you.” It did not come to him, merely, as an ordinance observed by the church, and though never so well authenticated: he did not merely receive it through the hands or the writings of the other Apostles; but he received it immediately from the LORD. He introduces his observations upon it, precisely as he does those which he makes in a subsequent chapter, upon the resurrection itself—where he speaks just as he does here—“I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also *received*.”^a

Of the light in which the sacrament of the Lord's supper is to be regarded, of the place which it holds in Christianity, of the vital importance of it to each of us, we may form some estimate, I say, from thus finding it, not only instituted as it was, but, even as the great doctrines of the death and the resurrection of our Lord, forming, also, the subject of a new and special revelation to the Apostle.

The importance, however, which is to be attached to it will appear sufficiently from the consideration of what, according to the design of its Divine Author, it is in itself.

In attempting to open, through the Divine assistance, the passage before us with this view, I may be permitted to abstain from any reference to those sacramental controversies, by which, in the hands of theologians, the bloom of the fruit has been so often effaced from it; nay, in the prosecution of which, the very olive-branch of peace has become the torch of discord!

“The same night in which he was *betrayed*” it was, Jesus took the bread. In his first introduction of the subject, the Apostle touches a chord which, in those for whom

^a 1 Cor. xv. 3.

the ordinance is designed, might well be expected to respond, by thus referring to the *time* of the institution. For what recollections are there not called up—is not the ordinance associated in the mind with whatever is most deeply and solemnly affecting to us, as it presents itself to us in connexion with that hour, in which “the Son of man was betrayed into the hands of sinners!”^b

Not that it was so much, it would seem from the context and the Apostle's object, that it was not so much with a view to the impression to be thus made, that the time at which it was instituted was referred to, as that the time of its institution is so significant of its design—as directing our thoughts to that event of which it was designed to be the perpetual memorial, and of the inestimable benefits of which there is a perpetual application in it. As in the sentence which immediately follows, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death”—or as in those words of our Lord himself, yet more fully expressive of the design of it, “This is my body which is broken for you—This is my blood which is shed for you.”

What lay at the root of the abuses respecting the Lord's supper which prevailed in the church of Corinth, was, that they regarded it—as a *religious* festival, no doubt, and of which they partook in the character of Christians, yet, s if it had consisted of what was before their eyes, rather than of any unseen supper, of what was spread upon the table, rather than of what was thereby represented to the apprehension of faith. But for such meals have ye not your houses? says the Apostle—This is one altogether of another character: as it might have been inferred, he suggests, even from the circumstance, that it was “*after supper* Jesus took the cup;” that it was *after* the repast of which the disciples had been partaking, this

^b Mark xiv. 41.

spiritual one was instituted—as not designed for the refreshment of the body, but for that of the soul. The bread and wine, he would say, except so far as they are employed to *represent* what you are *indeed* called to partake of in the Lord's supper, form in themselves no part of it. No—but the body which was broken for you, the blood which was shed for you, these are what you are *indeed* called to reach forth the hand to in it, these are what really constitute the Lord's supper. As he had said in the preceding chapter, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” And “therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,” says the Apostle. That is—it is not with the bread and the wine we have to do: The guilt consisted in their not discerning the Lord's body in his sacrament; in not perceiving in it more than what met the eye, and in their partaking of it according to such an inadequate and carnal apprehension of it.

The Apostle would awaken them to feel somewhat, with respect to this sacred ordinance, as Jacob felt, when he awoke from his dream and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven!”^c

In a word—We are invited to a feast—to a supper. Of what, then, does it consist? What is the entertainment provided at it for the guests? Entertainment of one kind or other there must be, to constitute it a feast. And it is *not* the bread and wine. The provision is no other than this—As our life consists in feeding upon Christ by faith, we have in this sacrament an especial opportunity of so

^c Gen. xxviii. 17.

feeding upon him. By an institution most significant of what his body and blood are to the soul, he conveys them to us in this sacrament, for the soul's life and nourishment. The sacrament of the Lord's supper has nothing less in it than this—It is not only a supper instituted by the Lord, but it is also, as faith is in exercise at it, a supper *upon* our Lord. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," says the Apostle, "therefore let us keep the feast"^d—the feast *upon himself*: as the typical passover was a feast upon the sacrificed lamb, which represented him. Of which feast upon himself, while it is at all times spread for faith, we have an especial opportunity of partaking, in this his own sacramental exhibition of himself. As he gave himself *for* us upon the Cross—in this his sacrament, even as he gave the bread and the wine to the disciples, he gives—he, in an especial manner, gives himself *to* us.

Accordingly, in that part of the exhortation in our Communion Service, in which the benefits of this holy sacrament are described, it is to no less high and blessed a privilege than that of "spiritually eating the flesh of Christ and drinking his blood," the communicants are invited: as in one of the thanksgivings in the after-service, it is for having "vouchsafed to feed those who duly received the holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ," we so heartily thank the almighty and ever-living God.

Was it not, indeed, to have been expected, antecedently to the institution, that when the ceremonial dispensation was about to be displaced by the more perfect one of spirit and of truth, whatever of an external character, in accommodation to our bodily part, should yet be retained in the spiritual dispensation, would have a directly spiritual subserviency—that anything of figure and shadow in it would not be

^d 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

without the corresponding substance and reality? Nay, was not Christ to be discerned by the eye of faith, even in the ceremonial dispensation? He was not only "the end of the law," but was in the law itself, "for righteousness, to every one that believed."^e With what a brightness and fulness, then, when in contradistinction to the external institutions "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,"^f was not his presence to be expected in the Gospel ordinances! It was as when the fruit has been perfected, the flower, which in its earlier and imperfect state served to protect and adorn it, falls off from it, as no longer needed. The flower is succeeded by the fruit itself, and whatever extraneous yet remains attached, is altogether with a view to the fruit. It was to have been expected before-hand, that of anything external that should be introduced in the spiritual dispensation, the object would be nothing less than the exhibition of what was spiritual—even of Christ himself.

It follows immediately, from what has been now presented to us of the nature of the ordinance, with what dispositions of mind it is for us to partake of it. As far, indeed, as the root of those dispositions is concerned, this second part of our subject has been anticipated. Plainly, a participation in what is tendered to us in such an ordinance, can be only through faith. We look not at the things which are seen in it, but at the things which are not seen. It is a special occasion for the exercise of faith, as it also affords (does it not?) special aids and confirmations to faith. It is for the eye of faith to discern, it is for the appetite of faith to desire, it is for the hand, for the mouth of faith to receive what is in the Lord's supper.

And therefore, "let a man examine himself," says the Apostle, "and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup"—let him examine himself, that is, (according to the

^e Rom. x. 4.

^f John i. 17.

context) whether he apprehend and realize what is presented in the sacrament to the apprehension of faith, or have no apprehension of anything in it, beyond the bread and wine themselves—whether there be anything of correspondence between what is within the veil of the ordinance, and his own state of mind. As also by the expression, “If we *judged* ourselves,” which is the same in the original with what in the sentence, “not discerning the Lord’s body,” is translated by “discerning,” by this expression also a trying and searching of ourselves is plainly directed, that we come not in an *undiscerning*, uncongenial state of mind, to these holy mysteries, in a state of mind inapprehensive of what is unseen within them; that the case be not ours, “while the Lord is in the place, not to know it,” but that we “discern the Lord’s body.”

Of the dispositions of mind with which it is for us to partake of the Lord’s supper, are we enquiring? We have only to consider what thoughts may be expected to spring up within us, what impressions to be made upon us, as, in the exercise of faith, we apprehend and discern what is exhibited to us in it.

Was it “the same night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread?” And why then was he content to be betrayed? Is it “in remembrance of his death” we do this? And what made him willing to encounter that death, even the death of the Cross? Can his love—that love passing knowledge—be absent from our minds, while we contemplate this unutterable expression and display of love? In this sacrament, our Lord would have us to be persuaded, to be ever more and more confirmed in the persuasion, of his unutterable love to us!

And can those sins of ours be absent from our minds any more, which were thus visited upon our suffering Saviour! Do we see him “wounded,” and can we forget that it was

“for our transgressions!” Do we see him “bruised,” and can we forget that it was “for our iniquities!”^g Is his bitter agony before us, and can we forget what it was that made his soul so “exceeding sorrowful!”^h Is that, his last cry still in our ears,ⁱ and can we forget what it was that wrung it from him! In this sacrament he would have us to be impressed with the exceeding greatness and heinousness of sin,—and of our own sins; that it was only by the shedding of the most precious blood, and this bruising of the most sacred body of the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, there was any deliverance from sin. What must sin be, he would have us reflect, for which the so dearly-beloved Son of God, when he put himself in the place, and became the representative, and took upon himself the responsibilities of sinners, was dealt with as he was, by that Father who so loved him!

What! and is this the blood which was shed for the remission of sins? And is it not, then, the token of pardon and peace to me—that when I drink of this cup I may enjoy a sweet renewed assurance that my sins are forgiven me? It is as if there had been put into the hand of him who owed the ten thousand talents and had nothing to pay,^j a discharge from the obligation, from any further liability to the debt. It is the cup of the New—of the *New* Testament, of that covenant which runs: “After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God; and they shall be my people: *for* I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.”^k When I drink of this cup of the new covenant of the forgiveness of sins, it is as though I heard a voice

^g Isa. liii. 5.

^h Matt. xxvi. 38.

ⁱ Matt. xxvii. 46.

^j Matt. xviii. 24—27.

^k Jer. xxxi. 33, and Heb. viii. 12.

from heaven saying it to me, "Thy sins are forgiven thee!"

And is it so, that "whoso eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, dwelleth in him and he in him," that "he that eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, hath eternal life"—and can the soul but glow and burn in the consciousness of the accomplishment of these promises, of the enjoyment of this fellowship, of the springing up of this eternal life within it?

And inasmuch as, "we, being many, are one bread, and one body,"^m have we not fellowship also with the whole church in this ordinance, as well as with the Head of it, and with that part of the church, too, (according to the elevating recognition in our communion service,) which, though they be no longer partakers with us of the one bread, continue in the same relation as ever to the one body? What communion this—which, though for the present it may be enjoyed very imperfectly, and even imperfectly comprehended, it is the declared design of this blessed sacrament to promote and advance, even as the communion with our Lord himself!

And is it "till he come" we are thus to show the Lord's death? And does the thought, then, of his coming, mingle its brightness and glory with the scene of darkness and the shadow of death? While we discern the Lord's body broken for us, is it also for us to discern it shining as the sun, and our own body "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body?"ⁿ

What thoughts and feelings will there not kindle within us, what affecting recollections rise up, what transporting prospects break upon us, while we thus "discern the Lord's body"—while, through these sensible elements, he makes all his goodness and love to pass before us—while we

^l John vi. 54, 56.

^m 1 Cor. x. 17.

ⁿ Phil. iii. 21.

“look upon him whom we pierced”^a—while we receive the tokens, this his own certificate, of the forgiveness of our sins—while, as in an especial manner, we dwell in him and he in us—while we are in especial communion with all his whole church, also, and while our eye is upon that blessed hope beyond, and his glorious appearing!

Such, then, are some of the dispositions of heart and mind, (as they have been glanced at, however,) all immediately springing out of the faith which is exercised in the discernment of the Lord's body in this holy sacrament, with which it is for us to engage in the celebration of it.

How it concerns us, then, my brethren, that we examine ourselves as the Apostle directs, and so eat of that bread and drink of that cup; that we “judge ourselves,” try and search ourselves; that, as it is no ordinary occasion for the exercise of faith, we trim our lamp, as well as see that we be in the faith; that our candle be more than just alight; that our wedding-garment have its gloss upon it; that, with the spiritual senses intently exercised, with the eye not dimmed by the breath of sense and the atmosphere of the world, but clear to discern the Lord's body, and with a hungering and thirsting for it inseparable from such discernment of it—how it concerns us, in order to this real participation in the ordinance, in order to our experiencing it as “the most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of Christ,” that we come with such a congeniality and sympathy of mind, to partake of the holy mysteries!

Nay, as we would not be regarded as unworthy, as well as be unblest communicants, does it not concern us so to examine ourselves? For, do not we hear of those of the Church of Corinth, who, while (as it appears) they were no insincere members of it, were yet unworthy communi-

^a Zech. xii. 10.

cants; who, while they were distinguished from those who were of the world, yet for having offended with respect to this holy sacrament, in tender mercy to them that they might not be condemned with the world, were chastened, and severely chastened, of the Lord? So possible is it that real believers should yet be unworthy receivers! None of us are there, to whom the exhortation is inapplicable—"Let a man *examine* himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of that cup."

After such a participation as that which has been now described, we shall be prepared "to offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies," not in word only, as "a holy and living sacrifice." For shall we not then return from the table of our Lord with hearts breathing out, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me!"^p But had we ten thousand hearts—has it never at such a time been thought—is not "the Lamb that was slain worthy" to have them all?

And shall I not add, that, without such a purpose to give him our all, without the purpose to make ourselves over wholly to Christ, that without the deliberate choice of Christ our Saviour, to the exclusion and rejection of whatever is opposed to and that comes in competition with him, it is for none to dare to approach his table, as they would not be numbered—I was going to say, with those who, while they were not insincere in their profession, were yet unworthy communicants, but in such a case as that supposed, in which, while the surrender of all to Christ is solemnly professed, what is opposed to him is deliberately preferred and pursued, is it not with those, rather, of whom we read in the former chapter, they would be to be classed, with whom, while they "all eat the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink," yet "lusting also after evil

^p Psalm cxvi. 12.

things, God was not well-pleased ;"—no, but as in what follows, made them signal monuments of his displeasure ?⁹

Not that I would use the language of discouragement. To speak discouragingly, while this blessed sacrament of the Gospel-grace is our subject, would be no ordinary anomaly and contradiction. In times past you may have given yourself wholly to the world, and yet now be no unwelcome guest. No ; nor is the consciousness, at the present moment, of never so great weakness, or of never so great corruption, any disqualification.

But, to come to the Lord's supper, without the honest purpose, henceforth, to abstain from whatever he forbids, and to comply with whatever he demands of us, to come without the intention and resolution to live henceforth as a Christian,—this were unworthiness beyond any that was contemplated by the Apostle. In any instance of such unworthiness, it is, as though we heard the Saviour repeating what he said so affectingly at the time of the institution of his supper, "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me upon the table."^r If I come, with the world, instead of Christ, in my heart, it is, as if I came with a dagger under the wedding garment, with which to pierce him afresh ! If I bring my sins with me to the table ; if "the old leaven," of the love of sin, of pleasure in sin, of the intention to continue in sin, be not "purged out," it is as if I put poison in the cup of the Heavenly Host who is entertaining me ! To return from the commemoration of that death, of which sin, accursed sin, was the perpetrator, to smile upon sin—what were it, but as if one whose best friend or father had fallen by the hand of an assassin, were seen embracing that assassin ; or, as if the wife, whose husband had been the victim, should run into the arms which were reeking with his blood ? It was not while the

⁹ 1 Cor. x. 3—6

^r Luke xxii. 21.

prodigal was among the swine and at the husks, it was not till he said, "I will arise and go to my father," that the feast was made for him.

But then—though we should have been in a like deplorable condition ourselves, if any resolve as he did, "I will arise and return to my father," and *do* so, as did the prodigal, no less welcome shall he be, than was he. In a like "best robe" shall he sit down at the feast, while there will be joy, "joy in the presence of the angels of God," as over one who "was dead, and is alive again, was lost, and is found!"^s

For hear we not the voice which comes so blessedly echoing from the sacramental table—that voice to a lost world from the Cross—Sinners for whom Jesus died, is it not, "turn ye and live!"^t—away with the "filthy garments," and "a change of raiment" is ready for you; even raiment "washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb!"^u Nay—no less ready is it for you, upon your awaking to righteousness, than, as you wake in the morning, is your own ordinary apparel. You have only to put on the one, as you do the other. "Come, for all things are now ready"^v—do not we hear? For Christ has died. The blood has been shed, which cleanseth from all sin. Pardon is ready. All grace is ready. Heaven is ready for you. And shall it not be added—in our own case shall it not—"His Bride hath made herself ready?"^w

It has been with the view of assisting in the preparation, that I have addressed you as I have done to-day, my brethren, that, on the ensuing Sabbath, we may present ourselves before our Divine Redeemer at his table, as his Bride, in our wedding garments.

^s Luke xv. 32.

^t Ezek. xviii. 32.

^u Rev. vii. 14.

^v Matt. xxii. 4.

^w Rev. xix. 7.

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have now heard with our outward ears, may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that we may be thereby assisted in duly apprehending and appreciating to what it *is* we are invited in the supper of our Lord, and that we may be "meet partakers of the holy mysteries," and be "fulfilled with thy grace and Heavenly benediction" in them, and that we may "offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, as a holy and living sacrifice to thee," through Jesus Christ our Lord.

TWO PLAIN ADDRESSES

TO

A COUNTRY CONGREGATION,

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM.

ADDRESS I.

MARK X. 13—16.

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

“But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.

“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

“And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

THIS passage you have just heard referred to, my brethren, in the baptismal service, as our encouragement and authority for bringing our children to be baptized. And of all the passages which might have been brought forward for the purpose, there is not one, perhaps, more truly encouraging than this. While we hear the gracious Saviour thus commanding that the children should be

brought to him, and see him taking them up in his arms—just as Peter said, in the case of Cornelius and his company, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”—it is for us to ask in like manner, Can any forbid that these whom the *Saviour* thus receives, should not be baptized as well as any others?

But this is not all. By the application of such a passage to baptism, we are at the same time reminded of what we gather from so many other passages—that in bringing our children to be baptized, it is to the Saviour himself we are bringing them—that we bring them (in the language of the baptismal service) to be embraced in the arms of his mercy, to receive from him the blessing of eternal life, and to be made partakers of his everlasting kingdom.

For *his* blessing, *his* embrace, the touch of *his* hand, is not to be thought of as a mere ceremony, or as a *human* expression of good-will, as they well knew it was not, who saw him lay his hand upon the blind man of Bethsaida, or who saw him touch the tongue of him who had an impediment in his speech, or who saw him lay his hand upon Peter's wife's mother. No less could the Saviour design to signify, than that little children were as much the subjects, as any others, of all the blessings of his redemption!

A view of baptism this, to make the heart of the Christian parent leap within him, is it not? And in times such as these especially, oh! can we think of our children with a moment's comfort, but in the hope of their being heirs of “a kingdom which cannot be moved?”

Or, is it too much for you to believe that the Saviour thus receives the children that are brought to him?—Hear then what he says, to remove all such doubts (in answer to those who would have kept them from him)—“Of such is the kingdom of God,” he says.

It is altogether to misapprehend the *nature* of his kingdom, he would say, to suppose that little children are not fit subjects for it; as though, in order to become such, we had to bring something of *our own* with us, which little children were not capable of bringing; as though we did not become possessed of all that Christ came into the world to give us, "without money and without price!" At whatever age we come to him, we come to receive all from him; as much as the dark air does the light. And he adds, therefore, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein," unless at whatever age we come, we come in this receiving spirit, as those who, so far from having anything to recommend them to his favour, are in themselves undone, for ever undone, but for mercy, as those who feel that all is of grace—that the soul's salvation from the first to the last, is the free gift, the mere mercy, the unmerited grace of God.

Let this, the real nature of Christianity, be understood by us, our Saviour would say, and little children we shall perceive to be as capable of it, as any others; as they are of the glory that follows it:—that none, in truth, are capable of it, but such as, without any other pretensions than little children can have, come to receive every thing as the free gift, the mere mercy, the unmerited grace of God.

And have you never read, must he not have been thinking —(Ah! this comes of ignorance or forgetfulness of the Scriptures,—) "that he was to gather the *lambs* with his arm, and carry them in his bosom?" For while, in the use of such a term, all the feebler ones of the flock are, without reference to age, comprehended; those to whom in both respects it applies, for their tender age as well as for their little strength, cannot be supposed to be excluded.

After this, you will not surely keep the little children from me, as though my grace did not extend to such as

them! What! and has sin so far prevailed and abounded, (I seem to hear him add,) as to derive itself in an inheritance of guilt, and corruption, and death, even to unconscious infancy; and shall not my grace, which has so much more abounded, extend itself to infancy also? Oh yes—sin, at the very gate of life, meets its conqueror!

But even *before* the Lord Jesus had thus expressed himself with respect to little children, and in those gracious words, and by his outward gesture and deed, thus declared his good-will and favour towards them, mothers, we see, encouraged, (as well they might have been,) by the reception which they had seen him give to all who applied to him, whether for themselves or for others, brought their little children also, in the expectation of a like reception for *them*. They had been present, perhaps, when the ruler of the synagogue fell down at Jesus' knees, and besought him for his little daughter, who lay a-dying; or, when he said to the widow of Nain, "weep not," and gave her such cause to stop her tears; or, when that afflicted father cried out, "Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son, for he is my only child; and lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out, and it teareth him, that he foameth again, and bruising him, hardly departeth from him. And the Lord rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him to his father."—Well might they have been encouraged, I say, by what they saw of his graciousness and tenderness on these and like occasions, to bring their *infants* also to him, though without any express permission to do so.

And can we doubt, then—we, who have not only these same instances before us, and such a variety of others like them, recorded in the Gospel, from which to gather assuredly, that "whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out;" but who see also the actual reception which he

gives to little children, and hear him commanding that they should be brought to him, and reproving those that would have kept them from him, and declaring that of such is his kingdom ; and when it runs through the whole covenant of grace, as so characteristic of itself, that its promises are for us and for our *children*—can we have a doubt, I say, of their being accepted, if we thus bring them to him ?

Oh ! but is He not ready to put the names of our *children* in the lease, as well as our own—in the lease of the inheritance to which *we* are born ? What ! has he taken us into the vessel with him, and would he have those who are so dear to us to be left behind, do you think ? Is it for what the Gospel history would prepare us ? If the lost son in the parable, when he returned to his father's house, had brought a wife and children with him, can we suppose that the loving father, while he had his arms about his neck, would have turned his *children* out of doors ?

But we are not left to suppositions. What was said to Lot when he was escaping from Sodom, is said to every parent, who is himself escaping out of this world's pollutions, "Hast thou any here besides ? Whomsoever thou hast, bring them out of this place." In a word—and to connect what has been said with baptism itself—when the jailor of Philippi, for instance, was *baptized* with his house, was it not after it had been said to him, "Thou shalt be *saved*, and thy house ?"

And may we not then use those words, nothing doubting, which are put into our mouth in the baptismal service, that we are "*persuaded* of the good-will of our Heavenly Father towards these infants ?" No—it is not He who forbids them to come to him ; but if they be forbidden, it is by those who are the most concerned to bring them to him, but who, alas ! so often fail to bring them.

They may bring them to the water: and their children are baptized with water. They may give them into the hands of the minister: but the Baptist himself could only say, "I indeed baptize you with *water*." But let them, in the arms of faith, bring their children to the *Saviour*, and the arms of his mercy are open to receive them. Anything but presumption will it then be, to hope (and as the prayer, of which there have been as yet the first breathings only, is *sustained*, so will be the hope) that the promises which, when they come to age, they are themselves bound to perform, "the Spirit working in due season,"^a will, (in that God's due season, however,) render them capable of performing.

But is it to be denied, my brethren, that baptism has been treated as though it were little more than a mere ceremony and empty form, a custom to be observed as other customs are; as the occasion of giving a child its name, perhaps, rather than for any higher purpose, unless it has been thought to act as a charm upon the child? Is it to be denied that parents have continually brought their children to baptism, without any the least apprehension of what we are so significantly taught by it, that the child's soul is unclean, and that unless washed in what alone can remove the soul's uncleanness, it can never be admitted where nothing can enter that defileth?—Is it to be denied, that parents have continually brought their children to baptism, as though they attached no meaning to such words as those of the Psalmist, "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me;" or to such as those of the prophet, "The heart"—the heart which we bring into the world with us—"is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and as though we had nothing to remind us of the inbred corruption, in the love of mischief,

^a Article xvii.

in the screaming self-will, in the bursts of passion, in the untruth, in these and other like breakings out of it, which we see even at the earliest age; and as if the Lord had never said, "Except we be born again"—except a second birth pass upon us altogether distinct from that of nature—"we cannot see the kingdom of God?" Nay; but has not baptism been regarded in such a light, that, in the minds of many, the thought of festivity, rather than of a holy sacrament, has come to be associated with the thought of a christening? It would seem often, so far from being the solemn act of renouncing the world and the flesh, to be one by which our children were initiated into the service and love of the world, and the indulgence of the flesh!

And could we expect that God should put his seal to the profanation, to the mockery of his sacrament—that he should honour those in it who thus dishonour him in it? If we can come to one sacrament unworthily, is it to be supposed that we cannot come unworthily also to the other?^b

^b It will not be supposed to be intended, that the grace of baptism depends altogether upon the parents—that it is only through the faith of the parents, baptism becomes the seal of the promises. "The Lord will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy." It is meant only, that it is not in the channel of the parental relation the mercy flows, except it be through the medium of the parents' faith—that in such instances no benefit is to be expected from the promise (so far, however, as the immediate parents are concerned,) "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed." The confidence which breathes through the baptismal service is manifestly the confidence of prayer—"So give unto us that *ask*"—is its language, "let us that *seek* find." Upon the only principle on which a liturgy can be composed—that of the assumption of faith in those who use it—for who but such are *capable* of prayer?) and according to the model with which the Lord's prayer supplies us (the petitions of which, while they are in the mouth of all, cannot be offered up *truly* except by those who truly believe) the prayer of faith is *assumed* in the baptismal service, and, therefore, that "we have the petitions which we desired," is assumed, *also*. It is not intended, however, to put any limitation

Here, then, we have the explanation why it is we see so few traces of baptismal grace—why it is those who are born in sin grow up in sin, grow old in sin. It is not that there was no grace in baptism for them, no more than it is to be inferred, because we see so few answers to prayer, because so many pray in their manner, and do not receive, that there is therefore no efficacy in prayer, that there are no promises to prayer; or because so many who hear the preaching of the Gospel go away unimpressed by it, that there are no promises to the preaching of the Gospel. But in all these cases we have the same explanation—that which is given us in the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans, “For what if some did not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?”

Who is it, then, that forbids the little children to come to their Father and their Saviour? And not only in baptism itself, but in after-life also, who is it forbids them? How often has a Sunday-school teacher to lament that the instructions given in school, so far from being enforced and recommended, are counteracted and defeated, by the example set at home! I seem to see the Saviour looking on, his heart yearning over those whom he loves so tenderly—And will you not, then, suffer them to come to me? Why will you dress out that child as you are doing, instead of turning its thoughts to the soul's dress? Why lead your child to think, that a place in this world is so much more to be thought of than a place in my kingdom? And as though he said, What can you expect, when your child sees such tempers indulged, hears the conversation at which it is present, sees you making such provision for the flesh, sees everything about you savouring of the flesh, spotted with

whatsoever upon the grace of baptism—no other than that of the election of God. It is only intended to admonish parents of their responsibility.

the flesh? How many children of such parents are at this moment—yet how shall I say it?—following their wretched parents up and down the lake of fire, charging those who brought them into the world with having brought them into that place of torment!

Ah! and not a few, it is to be feared, my brethren, even of those who would do better by their children, and are not without concern for their souls, yet, by a forbidding manner with them, by a repulsive, un-Christ-like treatment of them, forbid them to come to Christ. His religion is made to appear unamiable, if not untrue, to the child, who sees so much of what is contrary to it in the parent who professes it.

But it is not always thus. I trust that among ourselves there have been, and are, delightful exceptions. I cannot say what I have felt, as I have taken a child in my arms, which, I had reason to hope, its parents had been holding at the throne of grace before, in prayer that none of their sins might be visited upon it, that all those thick clouds might be blotted out which would separate between God and their child; and whose prayers, I could think, were still going up, that as I held its body in my arms, Christ would clasp its soul in his, that, as I sprinkled it with water, Christ would sprinkle it with his own blood, and that “hereafter it might not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and continue his faithful soldier and servant unto its life’s end:” and when, as I have returned it, I could think of the mother receiving it as from the arms of Christ himself, and to nurse and bring it up for Christ himself; and could then think of her, as spending the christening evening, not in levity and folly, but as though she would say to the friends around her, “Come, magnify the Lord with me!”—for have I not cause to magnify him, mother as I am of a child of God, a member of Christ, an

inheritor of glory ! Even as the mother of him whose birth we commemorate this day,^c had such joy and gladness at his birth, while she could think of him as “holy from the womb,” as one who would be “great in the sight of the Lord !”

And happy have I felt, as I have seen those coming up as godfathers and godmothers, whom I could expect to assist with their prayers also, and not with their *prayers*, only. We know, a mother who is unable to nurse her child, will be not a little particular in securing one of a healthy constitution to nurse it ; in ascertaining that there are no corrupt humours in her blood which she would be in danger of communicating to the child. And shall we be less careful in the choice of those who are to stand in a like *spiritual* relation to our children ? Shall we choose them because of their station and respectability in life, or their relationship to the child, be their Christian character what it may ; or with a view to their Christian character, be their station or the relationship what it may ?

And I would hope that the children brought here to be baptized are not without your prayers as a congregation, my brethren. It is for the sake of your prayers especially, as a congregation, that we thus administer baptism while you are all present—that, as the Apostle speaks, you may be “helping together by prayer for them” with those who are the most nearly interested in them. For is it not for every one of us to be interested for those in whom our divine Lord expresses such an interest ? When we see him thus taking them up in his arms, putting his hands upon them and blessing them, how ought not our hearts to go out to them, and our prayers to go up for them ! When we hear him saying, “Suffer the little children to come to me,” is it not for every one of us to do what in us lies to *bring*

^c St. John the Baptist.

them to him? There is not one of us, who, if he were passing by a house on fire, and heard there was a child in it in danger of being burnt to death, but would make every exertion to snatch it out of the flames—And what exertions should we not be willing to make, to bring such to Him who came to snatch them out of the fire that never shall be quenched?

And you, dear children, yourselves, do you see your Saviour's arms thus open to you, and feel no desire to be within those arms! You would not so refuse to run into a mother's arms? If even a kind friend should hold out his hand to you, you would not turn your back upon that friend! Is it because they feel no *want* of a Saviour, no want of what he offers them, that the young so continually turn their back upon their gracious Saviour? And do you then feel no want—Ah! even at *your* age the want *has* been keenly felt, of the forgiveness of sin, and strength against sin—and do you feel no want of one to guide you by those dangerous rocks, upon which so many young persons are shipwrecked? And have you no desire—Oh! if you but *saw* your Father's house, and that great and glorious city, which is up above sun and moon, the New Jerusalem—what would you not give to be carried in your Saviour's arms to it, this hour!

And, my dear young friends, you are entering life at a time when you little know what storms there may not be before you—storms from which you may indeed feel the want of shelter. But live in what times we may, as soon as the soul shall go out of the body—and when may not that be?—will it feel no want of shelter *then*? Oh! unless while you are *in* the body, you are in Christ, you will then feel the want—of a drop of water to cool your tongue. Yet I feel as though He in whose name I am speaking to you, dear young friends, would not himself have said this last to

you—Oh no ! our gracious Master would not have you to be pelted with stones to him—I was going to say ; but he would have you to be drawn with the cords of love to him—as he would have every one of us to be drawn to him, dear brethren.

What encouragement is there not in this passage for those also, who, though not children in age, yet feel themselves to be such from their weakness and helplessness ! It is with reference to them also, he says, “It is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these *little ones* should perish.” Or do you say, you have no learning ? But you hear your Saviour saying, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Or is it your feeling, what can such a weak, helpless, insignificant creature as I am, do ? Of what use am I in the world ? But has he not chosen “the weak things of this world, and the things that are despised in the world,” to be the very props and pillars of his kingdom in it ? For “to those who have no might he increaseth strength.”

The only question is—but it is one upon which your state for eternity is depending—have you received the kingdom of God, as a little child ? that is, as it has been explained—have you, in a deep sense of your own nothingness, and worse than nothingness, cast yourself upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus ? And is your whole soul, at this moment, hanging upon Christ, as the child hangs upon its mother ? You are, then, of the number of those of whom the Saviour says, “Of such is the kingdom of God.” Or, in other words, it is not whether you have great gifts, we are to ask you, or anything which has the glare of greatness upon it, as this world accounts of greatness ; but whether you have the greatness—whether in the course and

habits of your life, whether in your contentment with your lot in life, in the absence of all pretension in everything about you, in your dress, in your house, at your table, in your conversation, in your behaviour to those inferior to you, in teachableness under instruction, in meekness under reproof or provocation—whether, in these and like particulars, that disposition appears and expresses itself in you which constitutes the greatness of “the kingdom of heaven,” according to what we hear from him whose kingdom it is, “Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?”

Oh! that we may be becoming every day greater and greater thus, dear brethren—that we may have more and more of this the greatness of the kingdom of Heaven about us! Oh yes! that we may be “clothed with humility”—everything about us expressing it—that we may be, in a manner not to be mistaken, *ourselves* of the number of “the little children,” of the number of those of whom the Saviour says, “Of such is the kingdom of Heaven!”

Then it is—such views will then be given us of the glory of his kingdom, of the extent of his love, of the unsearchable riches of his grace, of the fulness of joy in his presence, and the pleasures for evermore at his right hand—for he reveals these things to his babes—then it is we shall be desirous, as earnestly desirous to bring our little ones also to him, if it were possible, as He is himself to have them: it will be no longer a place in this world we shall be seeking for them, but a place in *His* arms, in *His* kingdom.

ADDRESS II.

DEUTERONOMY vi. 4—9.

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

“And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

“And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”

THE last time when baptism was administered here, you heard the encouragements which we have, my brethren, thus to bring our children to the Saviour: for that in bringing them to be baptized, it is to the Saviour himself we are bringing them; that we bring them (in the language of our service) to be “embraced in the arms of his mercy, to receive from him the blessing of eternal life, and to be made partakers of his everlasting kingdom.” In this passage you hear, Christian parents, what you are to do with your children, when you have received them back *after* baptism. It is as though the charge which you have now heard, were given to each of you with your baptized child—“These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to *that*

child, and talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." For it is thus the promises of baptism are made good. As at the first, when it had been promised to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed," it was added, "For I know him, that he will bring up his children after him, and they will keep the way of the Lord." The promises to Abraham's seed were to be accomplished through Abraham's care in bringing them up in the way of the Lord. Just as when Hannah received her child from the Lord, she lent him, or, as it is in the margin, "returned him to the Lord, from whom, by petition, she had obtained him"—it is for the Christian mother, in like manner, when she receives her child "born again," to look upon that child as not her own, but as though she heard Christ saying to her, like what Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, "Take that child, and nurse it for me."

What a charge does there not then lie upon you, parents, when you receive your children back after baptism! If you can suppose some princess to drive up to a cottage door, and to leave a royal infant at it, to be brought up for her, you can picture to yourself, how the child would be received out of her hands, and what care there would be taken that it should form no habits, learn no words or manners, that it should keep no company, which would afterwards bring disgrace upon those who brought it up, and unbecoming the station of life to which it was born. What then, when the King of kings gives a child into your hands, to be brought up for him—to be brought up for the kingdom of heaven! Need I say, what pains it is for you to take, to bring him up suitably to his high destination, and to keep him "unspotted from the world?"

That parents may acquit themselves of the great responsibility, and execute the high trust which is thus reposed in them, "the words which I command thee this day shall be in thine *heart*," the Lord says to each of them. As, in baptism, we cannot bring our children to the Saviour, without having first come to him ourselves; so neither can we, after baptism, bring them up for the Saviour, without having first received his words into our own hearts. Oh! but what has He not done to put his words into our hearts, my brethren! Observe only, how this charge is introduced: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God"—It is the God of Israel, He who has shown himself as He has done, as Israel's God, who thus addresses thee; as it is afterwards, "When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you; then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt, with a mighty hand; and the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes, and He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers." It is as though He had said, It is the same God who had pity on thee in the bondage of Egypt, who opened a passage through the sea for thee, who led thee, and fed thee, and kept thee, and taught thee, and bore with thee, who did such things for thee in the wilderness, and is bringing thee to a land flowing with milk and honey—He it is, who says to thee, "My son, give me thy heart!"

To make the application to ourselves—Christian parents, it is the God, who, in the riches of his grace, brought you out of darkness into his marvellous light, who burst the bonds in which another master held you—who has forborne

to cut you off in your provocations—It is the God who withheld not his own Son from you, and with him, would give you all things, whose mercy and loving-kindness have followed you through life, and who is bringing you, and would bring your children with you, to a land where there will be no need of the sun to shine upon it, to a land flowing with streams at which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst—it is *this* God who asks of thee, (and is it without reason then he asks it?) that the words which he commands thee, should be in thine *heart*!

Then it is you will be qualified, and not till then, to be the nursing fathers and the nursing mothers of the heirs of Heaven. For then—to put a like case in familiar life—think of one in the extremity of affliction, a widowed mother, suppose, with her fatherless children around her, whose little all is about to be sold, to pay her deceased husband's debts; when one of the creditors, touched by her situation, not only withdraws his own demand, but makes himself answerable for every other, and leaves nothing undone that can make a widow's heart to sing—with what feelings would those children be brought up, towards such a benefactor! Would they be in the habit of hearing his name fall coldly from their mother's lips?—but would he ever enter their door, and not see countenances lighted up, as at the approach of one whose goodness was familiar to them? It is when the kindness and love of God our Saviour has been impressed upon the parents themselves, that the directions which are here given for bringing up their children for God, will appear no impracticable directions. As it was, when Peter could answer as he did to the question—"Lovest thou me?" that the charge was given him, as one which he would then be able, as well as willing to execute—"Feed my lambs."

Let us consider, briefly, what these directions are—"The words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

There are parents, who, while they express all affection for their children, are far from teaching diligently, often alas! do not teach them at all, what they owe to an *unseen* Parent. There are others, who, while they do not neglect the religious instruction of their children, yet do not make it acceptable to them; teach them *diligently*, it may be, but do not teach them *graciously*. The consequence is, in the former case, the child grows up self-willed, self-indulgent, as if there were no such thing as religion; in the other, with a distaste for it, and prejudiced against it. But when "the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart," when the assiduity in teaching has all the sweetness and tenderness which belong to Christianity to recommend it, at the same time that the child's mind is informed, his affections will be engaged.

But the directions are yet more particular: "Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." There are parents who teach their children religion as they would teach them French or music. As soon as the lesson is over, the subject is altogether laid by, till it comes round again, in its turn, as a lesson. How different this from the course commanded here—"Thou shalt talk of it when thou sittest in the house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up!"—As different, as salt when it is in a heap in the salt-cellar, and when it is sprinkled over all your food. We are not to teach our children religion, as one of the circle of sciences; but it is to be mixed up with every other, it is to be mixed up with all the events of life, with all the engage-

ments and occurrences of the day, and to be applied to them all.

“Thou shalt talk of it when thou sittest in thine house.” It is told of one, who afterwards became eminent for his Christian attainments, the well-known Dr. Doddridge, that he used to trace his first seeds of piety to the instructions which he received from his mother, before he could yet read, by means of some Dutch tiles, upon which Scripture stories were represented, which were in the chimney of the room in which they used to sit, and which she would explain to him as one in whose heart the stories were, as well as upon the tiles. From his experience of what he had thus learned himself, he would often recommend to mothers like modes of early instruction. In the humblest cabin, are you not reminded, as you see the hen upon your floor, employed the day long in distributing whatever food falls in her way to the little brood around her, that it is for you to be, in like manner, crumbling the bread of life continually, to the young souls under your care? And is there not, at the same time, suggested to you, as what your child can understand and feel, as well as yourself, the application of that sweetest expression of Divine tenderness, that, “as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,” there is one who would gather you and yours under His?

“And when thou walkest by the way, thou shalt talk of it.” And does the walk afford no opportunities of such familiar instruction? Does the garden afford none, and the field? When at this season of the year you see the hay-harvest in progress, and as soon as the grass is cut, the weeds which grew up with it gathered out, and raked into heaps by themselves—“and it will be thus,” could you not say touchingly to your child, “as soon as the

scythe of *time* shall have mowed *us* down, that many and many, whom the long-suffering of God is now sparing, will be gathered out from among the rest and burnt, like those weeds? Can the mother, who is not herself insensible to the goodness which breathes around her in the rich variety of the simplest garden, in all its beautiful tints, and in the odours which perfume it, fail to draw the attention of her *children* to that goodness, thus supplying all things so richly to enjoy? Will she not thus turn their thoughts to Him, who, while the world sees no beauty in him that it should desire him, would help us, in nature also, to some faint conception of what he is, by the comparison of himself to "the lily of the valleys and the rose of Sharon?"

What is meant, is this—That it is not by lessons at stated times, kept apart, and distinct from the other engagements of the day, that it is not by bringing truth before the young mind in a chapter or in a catechism, unconnected with the life, parents can hope to fulfil the sacred trust reposed in them, or that they will be taking the prescribed means of fulfilling it. The question suggested by the directions here given is this—Whether there be Christianity in the *atmosphere* that is around your children? You may have seen a child, after having passed some time in the unhealthy air of a city, though it might not have wanted for its regular meals while it was there, yet returning from it a sickly child. It is when the Bible not only has its place in the succession of lessons, but when its golden thread is twisted with the thread of the whole life, when it is still referred to, as occasions arise, as the rule of life, and as the balm of life, as the balance in which all actions are to be weighed, and as the spring of all goodness, and of all happiness—then it is, we may hope to see character formed, as well

as knowledge acquired—to see the soul cast in the mould, as well as the head instructed in the doctrines, of the Gospel. I have heard the difficulty lamented of awakening in a child a real sense of sin. But if, not only in the school-hour, but at other times also, as often as any bad temper breaks out, or if the child has been looking about, during church-time, for instance, or when anything occurs that calls for correction, the Bible be then made to charge the conscience; and while the opposite to what is reprov'd is to be seen in her, who, while she has the Bible upon her lips, has it in her heart also—let those say, who have made the experiment, according to these God's own directions, and in dependence upon his own convincing of sin, whether they have found the difficulty insurmountable!

There is one thing more to be observed, and which has been now glanced at, which is, in order to any success whatsoever, the necessity of a consistent example. With a view to which, father, mother, “thou shalt bind these words as a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.” “Thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand”—that “whatsoever thy hand findeth to do,” you may seem to see written upon it, how God would have you to do it: in your dealings, for instance, that “no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter:” or, if you meet with provocation, and be tempted to raise your hand, that you may see in large letters, as it were, upon that hand, “do violence to no man.” “And they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes”—that you may see every thing in the light in which God himself sees it; that the world may appear to you, not in the false colours in which the god of this world decks it out, not through the golden mist, through which he would have you to see it, but stripped of its disguise; that

your children, when they perceive you to be thus dead to the world yourselves, may come to see it with *your* eyes, and may grow up, as those who are not of it. "And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates"—that as often as you go out, whether to your business, or into company, or though it be but to speak to one at your door, you may carry words with you, by which you may be kept yourself, and of which others also may have the benefit: and on your return home, that no tempers may break out, contrary to those which you would desire to see in your children; that every thing within doors may be regulated by the one standard; that your table, and the conversation which passes at it, may be such as that your children shall observe you, in your hours of relaxation, also, under the same all-pervading influence by which you are governed at other times. Let the instructions, such as have been described, be thus supported by our example, my brethren, and what nurseries for heaven will not our families be!

And let it be well observed, that every parent, be his situation in life what it may, and under whatever disadvantages of education he may labour, is yet expected to bring up his children thus. "Hear, O Israel," it is: all Israel is addressed. Hear, every Christian parent—you are expected, from the place which you hold in Christ's Church, to have such a knowledge of the Bible yourself, and so to frame your life according to it, that your children shall be ever hearing it from your lips, and seeing it in your practice. And let none make it a cloak for an indolent neglect of these directions, that after all they can only *tell* these things to their children; that they cannot give them grace. For do we, for such a reason, relax our exertions in other matters? If you had an infant dangerously ill, whose life, you were told, depended upon its getting sleep, though

the mother, to be sure, could not herself give the sleep, yet would she, on that account, leave the cradle unrocked, or the lullaby unsung? Though the farmer cannot himself make his crops grow, does he therefore leave his fields unploughed, or his seed unsown?—as if God would be wanting on His part, while we are faithful on ours!

Ah! dear brethren, has it then been so with us who are parents? Say, during the last week, have you been teaching these words thus diligently to your children, while sitting in the house, while walking by the way with them? And have they seen you yourselves consistent with what you taught them? As the promises fail, (do not apply to us, that is,) when in baptism itself we do not bring our children to the Saviour, as he commands us; they will no less surely fail, when we do not bring them up for the Saviour, as he commands us, after baptism. Then let every father and mother present lay their hand upon their heart, and say, whether the object which they have nearest it for their children be to bring them up for God—In other words, whether it be the object of every instruction you give them, of every accomplishment you seek for them, of every situation in which you place them, of every connexion which you form for them, that they may thereby become the better qualified, or have the better opportunity, to serve the Divine Master, to whom you have dedicated them. For is it not so, when to qualify ourselves for high places in *this world* is our object? A distinguished person of the present day, who not long since filled one of the highest situations in the United Kingdom, upon the occasion of an arduous discussion in the legislature, when he felt himself standing, as he said, upon the brink of the most adventurous question that had ever been submitted to the English peers, expressed himself to the following effect:—“that if he could have foretold, in his earliest years, he should ever have

lived to stand in the place which he then occupied, and upon such an occasion, he would have devoted every day and every hour of that life which had passed, to prepare himself for a task under which, he even felt as if he should then sink, to gather from all the sources of ancient wisdom, lessons which might have served to guide him at so eventful a crisis, and have enabled him to correct every infirmity of mind which might impede the discharge of the solemn duty which he had undertaken of advising that house, and to eradicate from his mind everything that might interrupt the most perfect candour and impartiality of judgment." And if "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," be the prize at which we aim for our children—if that they may sit on his right hand and on his left in his kingdom, that they may shine as the stars for ever and ever, be our ambition for them, shall not *we* be gathering from all the sources of ancient wisdom, of that wisdom which was from everlasting, from him who is "made unto us wisdom," lessons to form the character, to correct every infirmity of mind and temper—shall we not devote every day and every hour we can command, to make them meet to be partakers of that inheritance of the saints in light?

Parents, has your education of your children been such? Nay, *Christian* parents, has *yours*? Or have you been like him rather, upon whose name, as a father, is left the indelible reproach, that instead of bringing up his sons for God, he honoured them *above* God, and thus drew down upon himself a sentence, to make every ear that heard it to tingle, that "all the increase of his house should die in the flower of their age—that there should not be an old man in Eli's house for ever?" Has there been any like want of zeal for God, in the bringing up of *your* children—of zeal for the education of their souls? Have the words of God been heard only incidentally from you, as from Eli,

instead of having been heard by them “when thou wast sitting in thine house, when thou wast walking by the way, when thou wast lying down, and when thou wast rising up?”

Ah! and perhaps, parents, not only have these words not been made familiar to their ears by you, but words *have* been made familiar, which were, as if when your son asked for an egg, you gave him a scorpion. Perhaps, they have heard words from you, by which their young minds have been inflamed with the love of the world. Perhaps, some child here has heard her mother speak oftener, and with more interest, of the dress of the body, than of that of the soul.

It may be, your children have heard more expressions of discontent from you, than what were your obligations to Him who withheld not his own Son from you; or that superiors have been spoken of in their presence with disrespect, and neighbours with unkindness; not to speak of the angry words, and the fretful words, and the quarrelsome words—and, perhaps, between the parents themselves—and must I not add, the filthiness and the profaneness which it may have been the calamity of some to hear, from those who were charged with teaching them the words of eternal life, when sitting in their house, when walking by the way, when lying down, when rising up!

And is it any wonder, then, that we hear the complaint so frequent, “I can get no good by my children?” Ah! but is it not for *them* in all such cases to recriminate—and what a sting will there not be one day in the recrimination—that it was *they* who could get no good from those from whom, of all others, they had the most reason to expect it, that they have to thank ungodly *parents* for having lived themselves without God in the world, that it was *they* who mixed up for them that cup of the wrath of God, which they must now drink for ever and ever? Even in this

world, what such spectacle of woe, (for it is one beyond the reach of Christianity—it is one of those few cases for which Christianity itself affords no relief—for which “there is no balm in Gilead.”) Oh! is there to be conceived such another case of blank woe, as to see a mother wringing her hands because one is not, for whom you dare not tell her “not to sorrow as others who have no hope,” because he for whom she sorrows gave no *ground* for hope, and she has to thank *herself* he did not? Parents, parents! if you would not subject yourselves to bitter anguish like this—if you would not plant such a dagger in your soul, to rankle in it to your dying hour—if you would not go down with a load of sorrow insupportable to your grave—fail not, then, while you are yet able, to teach these words diligently to your children, while sitting in your house, while walking by the way, when lying down, when rising up!

Dear children, that the hearts of those who love you, may never be made thus to bleed for any of you! Thank God, there are those among you, who are blest with that first of all earthly blessings—parents to whom, dear as you are to them, the words of their God are dearer; and who let you see that they are. And you have all of you opportunities of hearing his words from other teachers, in whose own hearts, I pray, they may take a deeper and deeper root! And from this place you hear them again and again. Oh! and that you may so hear them, dear children, as to come indeed to know Him whose words they are—as to come to feel the kindness and love of God your Saviour, as you can feel the kindness of a friend, and the affection of a parent—and that the hope of the home which He has prepared in heaven for you, may be more to you than the enjoyment of the happiest home on earth! Then we shall see you, dear children, as, I trust, we do see some of you already, not the sport of youthful lusts, and ungoverned passions, but under

the government of the Bible. Yes ; as though you saw its sacred words upon your door-posts when you come out, you will not be seen idling and wasting your time, throwing stones, playing mischievous tricks, on your way to school and as you return from it : and when you enter your own door again—as though you saw over it “ Children, obey your parents in the Lord,” you *will* be sweetly obedient to them—as though you saw the words there “ Be kind one to another, tender-hearted,” you *will* be kind and affectionate in your intercourse and in your plays with one another, and instead of seeking to please yourselves, your constant endeavour will be to be like Him of whom it is said, as what of all other things the most distinguished him, that He “ pleased not himself.” Ah yes ! as though you saw upon your *hand* the words of the God of love, the complaint will not be made, when another is in tears, that it was that hand which was the cause of them. It will be with you, dear young friends, even as it was with him who said “ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way ? —Even by ruling himself after thy *Word*.” That Word, “ when thou goest, it will lead thee ; when thou sleepest, it will keep thee ; when thou wakest, it will talk with thee.”

I sometimes think, what a few young persons of such a stamp might not be the means of doing among the rest ! And I think of it, not without the hope but that we may see such an influence exercised in our several schools. Yes ; notwithstanding what I know of the taint and poison that there is in one bad boy’s conversation and example, yet when I think of Him who “ came to destroy the works of the devil,” and that He has those who are his among you, I venture even to hope (and shall we not have your prayers for it, my brethren ?) that the little leaven may leaven the whole lump.

I cannot take leave of the subject without making some

application of it to those young persons especially, who now have taken upon themselves, in their own person, the engagements which you have heard this day made, in the person of others—that they would be the Lord's, and renounce all other lords, that they would withstand the devil, deny the flesh, oppose the world, believe the Gospel, and continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to their lives' end. You are here reminded, dear young friends, by what means to *fulfil* the great engagement. Are you in the midst of many and great dangers? Indeed you are. But, "by the words of thy mouth," said one who was in the midst of as many—"By the words of thy mouth, I have kept me from the ways of the destroyer." We would, then, with an especial application to you, who have now been confirmed, repeat what you have been already hearing. If, according to the prayer which was offered up for you, you would "continue Christ's for ever, and increase in His Holy Spirit more and more, till you come to his everlasting Kingdom," if you would be "faithful unto death, and receive a crown of life"—then take these words of Him, to whom you have devoted yourselves, lay them up in your heart, bind them upon your hand, write them upon your doors and upon your gates; or, as the Apostle has it, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," that you may have it, to strengthen you against every temptation, to guide you in every difficulty, to sustain you under every trial, to prompt you to all labours of love—that it may be at once as the soul's compass, in the perilous voyage on which you are embarked, and may be as sails to the soul, also.

Dear brethren, that it were so with all of you! And why should it not be so with all of you? "Hear, O Israel," it is—All Israel is addressed. Hear, every one of this whole congregation! The promises are to *you*. For "to as many

as the Lord our God shall call," they are. And the Lord our God has called *you*. At this moment He is calling you. "Hear, and your soul shall live," he says, be you who you may. "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life," he says, "and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life." And are not these words, words worth the hearing, and worth laying up in the heart, and binding upon your hand, and writing upon your doors, and upon your walls? Think, however, what they will be to those upon the tables of whose hearts they have been written by the Spirit of the living God, when no other words will be of any value to them—what it will be, at the approach, and under the arrest of the last enemy—when you shall begin to feel the icy hand of death upon you—when you are in the iron grasp of death—think what it will then be to have within you, brethren, the words of eternal life!

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that these thy words may be in our hearts. O graft them there by thine own *Spirit*, that we may teach them effectually to our children, that our whole life may be under the government of them, and that they may give us peace at the last. O grant it, mercifully forgiving us all past neglect of thy Word, whether in the bringing up of our children, or in the framing of our own lives by it, for thy dear Son's sake!

LONDON :
BLACKBURN AND PARDON, PRINTERS,
HATTON GARDEN.



